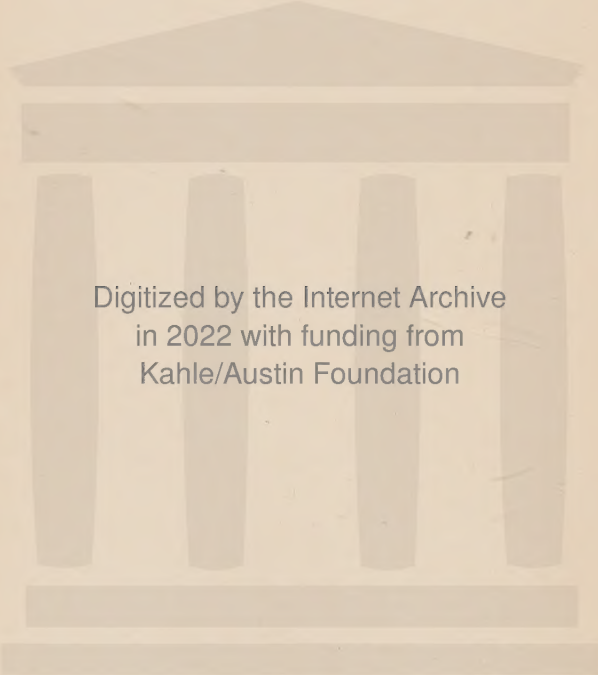


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Armchair Philosophy

By

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TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER

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Armchair Philosophy

WHEN a philosopher of the impossible or the improbable wants to be really disdainful toward the philosophy of an opponent, he labels it "armchair philosophy." The epithet is more or less common. Every once in a while you hear of some philosopher pulling up his window-shades, glancing out at the bright world that flits gayly past his door and then uttering some caustic thoughts on the subject of common-sense. That is the inevitable prelude to remarks on the subject of armchair philosophy. Or it may be that he picks up in a dark bookshop, where, as a rule, they do not deign to handle any tome weighing less than two pounds, some little volume filled with hopeful optimistic reflections on the life and destiny of man; whereupon he is sure to turn up his nose, roll his short-sighted eyes toward where heaven used to be located, and mutter under his breath the pet condemnation.

The condemnation contains the quintessence of contempt. To refer to a philosophy as originating in an armchair is, in the eyes of men of this type, to brand it as hopelessly puerile, out of harmony with science and its laws, and bearing to genuine philosophy the relation of home-made fudge to bread and beefsteak. For genuine philosophy must reek either of the laboratory where specimens, including the experimenters, alone are welcome, or of some library from which have been excluded all the comforts of life. It must subtly suggest test-tubes

and microscopes even while it may be in opposition to any information ever gained through scientific apparatus; it must be very mysterious, technically abstruse, and, by preference, startlingly at variance with common experience. Philosophy has its natural shrine in austere studies where the light of heaven is tolerated but not encouraged, or in laboratories where the perfume of chlorine is preferred to that of the rose.

And to suggest mildly that philosophy might be suited for consumption in an armchair, to the pleasant accompaniment of light gray smoke and fur-lined slippers, is to debase the queen of sciences to the level of best-sellers and magazines with pretty-girl covers.

When you come to the rub, I rather doubt whether most men would enjoy their firesides or their good cigar or their slippers very long in company with some of our most fashionable philosophers. Fancy any man's really enjoying the discovery that he actually does not see the things that he thinks he sees, but that instead he manufactures an unreal wife and "kiddies" out of his own evolving spirit. Fancy a man's drawing long, satisfying puffs out of his cigar as he reads that the only positive feeling is that of pain, that "We ought to be miserable and we are so," and that the highest point of happiness is annihilation. Does it not make the gas-logs look brighter and more cheerful to learn that one has no free-will, that for a great-great-grandfather one had a chattering ape, and that one really ought to be up and fighting might and main toward the superhuman?

The one consolation about these current philosophies of gloom and contradiction is that few people are stupid enough really to believe them. They are ingenious, clever bits of sophistry; but the man who attempts them from

the vantage point of an armchair is more likely than not to end by knocking the ashes off his cigar, pitching the volume where the dust will be sure to find it, and going out to live his life on lines that, judged by the aforesaid standards, are most unphilosophical.

Unquestionably a large percentage of the philosophers whose writings are current today are making the egregious mistake of supposing that no truth ever came out of any room in the architectural world save a laboratory, and that any statement which can be grasped without the aid of logarithms or a series of mental acrobatics is, on the face of it, too childish to employ the cultured mind even long enough to condemn it. So the philosopher in the armchair and the reader in the armchair fall alike under their contemptuous glance. Armchairs and philosophers have no common denominator.

So let me begin with a confession. I am seated at this moment in an armchair. It is not a very handsome one, plain wood of an unclassified variety, with a leather seat which has taken an incurable sag, and an iron brace which is a concession to age and long service. In just such a chair, to complete the humiliating confession, I have studied whatever of systematic philosophy I may have acquired.

But you must not imagine that the philosophy learned in my armchair came done up in a holiday package with a red ribbon and a sprig of holly. It is the philosophy that made Aristotle's pupils gather from the ends of the earth to fill the Lyceum. Thomas of Aquin wedded it to Christian thought and raised it to something almost sacramental. It is the philosophy that for centuries was taught wherever philosophy was worshiped, and today, after a period of exile, it has crossed once more to

England with Cardinal Mercier. It is a philosophy which has eagerly taken up the best in scientific thought and discovery. It has gone farther into the essence of things than any philosophy ever synthesized by man. But above all, it is philosophy which lays its roots in an almost Divine common-sense, and which is proudly and fearlessly the champion of human nature.

As I sat in my own armchair, I have thought of the many men and many women the world over who likewise sit in armchairs. There is milady, who, when the children have been dispatched to school and the house has been set face about, sinks into her wicker basket-chair in the warm sun-parlor and reaches for a book. There is the lord and master, who, after a long day at his desk, fits his body into his favorite leather lounging-chair, and, after a long puff to assure himself that his cigar is burning properly, runs his eye over the library table for the volume he began last night. Why, after all, should there not be armchair philosophy, since so much of our life is spent in just such bless-the-man-who-invented-them comfortable pieces of furniture? Why act as if philosophy were the mind-food of an intellectual élite wearing glasses of extra thickness and afflicted with a mania for playing at jiu-jitsu with any sort of technical term? Why treat philosophy as false simply because it is simple?

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, a delightful philosopher of the armchair, has done much to reinstate in his proper dignity the man who writes all his letters before his name. To Mr. Chesterton's far-seeing mind, I'm sure, Mr. P. H. D. Brown has an intellect quite as capable of attaining truth as Mr. Brown, Ph.D. And the fact that there are so many more P. H. D. Browns than Browns,

Ph.D., would make the former much more worthy of his attention.

So these papers on armchair philosophy are addressed to the ante-lettered—it is unfair to say unlettered—men and women who sit like myself in armchairs. Philosophy is, after all, an analysis of life in its ultimate causes and destiny, and these men and women are living lives of tremendous import and living them in the very midst of a riot of life. The philosophies of so many writers of the past century and a half have just this to condemn them, that they are out of touch with life. Many a philosopher holds that there is no such thing as matter in the world, largely because he does not know what it means to worry about tomorrow's supply of buns and bullion, not to mention Charlotte's new party gown and the leg Algernon dislocated in a football game. It is one thing to sit in a study, with the electric lights switched off, and concoct vast arguments to prove the theory that we have no free wills, and quite another to set one's jaws and fight off the allurements of vice or an inherited tendency to drink, for the sake of a wife and baby at home. These philosophers have looked too long through the microscopes to see anything larger than an amoeba. They have gazed so long at the stars that our little earth slips from their range of vision. It is hard to convince some of them that anything obvious, like love and babies, bricks and beefsteaks, the fact that two and two make four and that a thing cannot be and not be at the same time, is true. A little touch of nature, applied preferably in a way to rough one up, is often a splendid antidote for philosophical speculations which are spun out of stardust and the tenuous vapors of Mars.

But men and women often sit in armchairs because they are weary with the battle we call life. They are flesh and blood and soul, not theories; their long experience has made them keen appraisers of the true and the false. Philosophical jargon they have never learned, but they can understand the language of smiles and quickly raised eyebrows, of silent lips and set jaws. They know that a philosophy which does not fit with life's necessities and which contradicts the cold, brutal facts of their experience may be as fascinating as phantoms of a heat-oppressed brain, but it offers no explanation of the riddles that underlie all life.

If, then, my armchair philosophy, which, of course, is not mine but the heritage of the great Catholic world, can do anything, it can explain the riddles at which modern philosophies vainly strain. And as such an explanation do I offer it to all who are my companions in arms.

II

Intellectual Harakiri

SCEPTICISM, the theory that we can be certain of nothing, has like flowing whiskers or Grecian fillets, its periods of vogue. The phrase, "Really, I believe in nothing, don't you know," carries with it a dashing hardihood that has fascinated more or less intensely certain types of mind from the ages lost in Egyptian darkness to our own days of colleges and cabarets. Pyrrho and Arcesilaus made universal doubt the smart philosophy among the élite of Greece. Montaigne, whom our own O. Henry refers to as his bully old pal, spun this theory through the pages of his fascinating essays. In England, David Hume held positively that one can be positive about nothing, while a sceptical attitude toward all truth is not at all uncommon even in this present day.

Yet modern science, with its positive assurance that immutable laws underlie all things, has done much to make ridiculous the man who doubts about everything, who doubts that he doubts, and is not quite sure that he doubts that he doubts. Ibsen could hold that *not even* on the moon two and two make four; but if he went the inevitable step further and doubted if anything be true, he would be considered to violate what is at present philosophical good form. The universal sceptic is not uncommon, it is true, but he is rather a curious relic of a past age when men spun long arguments to prove that an arrow shot from a bow cannot by any possible chance move toward its target. Modern siege guns somehow do not fit in with theories like that.

Yet it is absolutely necessary to begin our essays in armchair philosophy by assuring ourselves that we are certain about a great many things. With this once established, we have a clear space with a fine bedrock foundation for our structure.

The most cursory glance is enough to convince us that we act all our lives on the supposition that we are certain about any number of things. The man who acted otherwise would be worse off than the man who stood still. We arise in the morning certain that the sun will give forth light, and we put our feet out of bed in the calm assurance that they will find a floor under the bed. We splash around in our bath assuming with certainty that the water will not suddenly burst into flames. We eat our breakfast in the certainty that eggs and bacon and cereal and rolls are a necessary condition of our bodily strength. The conductor returns us twenty cents from our quarter, and we are certain that twenty cents plus five cents make the fourth part of a dollar.

Downtown, we dodge a swiftly moving car because we are sure that a heavy object hurts when it hits. We enter our office-building certain that our office has not moved itself to a higher floor nor dropped down the elevator shaft. All day we labor at our desk in the certainty that the earth will revolve without our worry, that the letters we read have a real significance, that our answers to them will be intelligible to their recipient, that we are serving our loved ones with each tick of the clock, and that the night is coming when no man can work. When we return in the evening, we are certain that food is not poison, that armchairs are not to be used as tennis rackets, and that books are intended to be read and not smoked in a pipe. Life, even in its most com-

monplace aspects, is grounded on a certainty which the average man would never be stupid enough to question.

Not so my grave philosophical sceptic. He doubts everything. He is certain, or says he is, about nothing. Perhaps when he puts his feet out of bed, they may hang over the brink of the universe. The water may turn his bath into a miniature inferno; life may be sustained without food; twenty cents plus five cents may, by some trick of elastic currency, total a dollar. The oncoming trolley may pass over his form with the lightness of a zephyr. How is he to be sure? Poor chap, he lives in a continuous mental tremble for fear that the world may suddenly crumble beneath his feet; for who knows but that, like the children's moon, it is made of green cheese and honeycombed with mice?

Certainly if any theory ever deserved the title of intellectual harakiri, it is this theory of universal doubt. Like some Japanese suicide, it rips itself open with its own knife. One prefers for the good name of human kind, to believe that it is after all a mere mental pose. Our philosophical sceptic fights against all the patent facts of life furiously and with all his subtle acumen. "I am certain of nothing," he summarizes. Argument with such a man is like foxtrotting with an eel, but you attempt it. "Are you quite sure of that?" you inquire ingratiatingly. "Absolutely," he answers. "There," you retort in triumph, "at least you are certain that your theory is correct, so you really do not doubt everything." He stammers. "That was a slip," he says. "I should rather say, I am not certain even of my theory." "Yet you are certain that you have a theory, and you are certain that you doubt it; you are sure that such a person as yourself exists to doubt the theory, and quite sure that other peo-

ple do not hold that sort of nonsense. Anyway, how dare you fight for a theory which you are sure is only 'doubtful?'" As one of Father Benson's young Londoners would say, "Isn't it all dreadful tush?"

As a working hypothesis or a theory of life, universal doubt would make the Mock Turtle smile. Be sure you are right and then go ahead, would be revamped by the sceptic to read: Be sure you are right, and since you never can be sure of anything, do not dare to move. In the quiet of his room the universal sceptic is quite sure he is certain of nothing; but just dare him to leap from an aeroplane on the supposition that he might fall up and not down. Hand him a red parasol and invite him to walk in a pasture where grazes a bull blessed with sharp horns and a vicious disposition. Suggest that he try doing without food on the supposition that food may not be necessary for life. Pay him for fifty dollars' worth of goods with two ten-dollar bills, explaining that you are not sure but what they may make the desired amount. In an instant his fine theorizing evaporates like alcohol left in the sun. Life and his theory lie in different planetary systems.

Philosopher of the armchair, I am not waging warfare on tin soldiers. Men have existed and do exist who persuade themselves that they are certain of nothing. And their theory undermines the whole edifice of philosophical certainty.

The chief difficulty in the way of the universal sceptic's sanity is his unwillingness to accept the obvious. To his mind, philosophers are the only ones with any claims to knowledge. In the past, man has made some rather large mistakes, believing, for example, that the world is flat; in consequence, he doubts the value of all the truths

grounded in human experience. On the contrary, the sane philosopher is not the one who rejects and derides the obvious; he examines it further, discovers the foundations on which it rests, and drives it to its ultimate conclusions. He does not claim to be an intellectual Balboa standing on the shores of a hitherto unknown sea. He knows that we are certain about many things, and he goes further in his effort to prove the sanity of this conviction. The philosopher who in the pursuit of truth spurns the natural certainty of all men is simply diving into a cave open only at one end.

Universal doubt is, then, contradictory as a theory and as a practical basis for action about as useful as are handcuffs on a juggler. We are so certain of some facts that we build our lives upon them. The amusing part of it is that the most blatant of sceptics is ultimately forced to do precisely the same things as the rest of mankind.

Another point to be insisted on is that any philosophical theory that would lead us back to the point where we could be certain of nothing is on the face of it false and destructive. Men make mistakes, it is true, when without sufficient reflection they form snap judgments; they are often inclined to give a ready assent without investigating the reasons which should lie back of every affirmation. But for all that, our minds are blessed with a certainty that no intellectual sleight-of-hand can ever cause to disappear. Any theory, then, that endangers the certainty without which we cannot so much as raise a finger, pet a baby, or converse with a friend, must find its way to the philosophical scrap-heap. By its side, an ox team or a high-wheel bicycle is a tremendous vehicle of progress.

III

The World of Sight and Other Senses

WE do not need the poets to tell us that the world is beautiful. Rather, the spirit which moves poets to symbolize human emotions in flowers and waterfalls, and the impulse which reproduces in marble and on canvas the loveliness of nature are merely the highest expression of an appreciation latent in the dullest hearts. Burns and Shelley, Claude and Turner were only the high priests who paid to nature the tribute which all men feel is its due.

And when tellers of fairy tales try to conjure up an enchanted paradise in which sleeps the bewitched and bewitching princess, they can do so only in words whose meaning is first known from sights and sounds and tastes and perfumes that reach our senses. The very wonders of the Apocalypse are the glorified splendors which the tangible world offers to our unceasing delight.

No one is silly enough to contest that we have not all these same sensations of beautiful objects and enchanting sounds and delicate scents. Without them, why patronize art galleries and symphony concerts and flower-shows? No more does anyone deny that we see toads and hear factory whistles and scent tanneries. But since the dawn of philosophy, men have fought over the causes of these sensations, and they are fighting over them to-day:

In broadest outline, the contestants fall into two

classes: Those who, in accordance with common-sense, claim that there are real, solid objects outside of us corresponding to our sensations; and the Idealist who, in the face of experience, maintains that sensation is the product of the soul alone, because nothing exists outside of the soul which is thinking. There are no mountains and streams, no fair faces and muscular arms, no houses, nor horses, nor motors. One thing alone exists—spirit; and spirit creates for itself without any real existence on their part all the objects we call material. From our own bodies, which are mere illusions, to the sun in the heavens, which has no real entity, every gram of matter is the product of the thinking mind. If all thought were suddenly to cease, the material world with all its beauty would vanish like the dream of a sleeper suddenly aroused from his slumber. According to the Idealists my spirit is so ordered by nature that it produces for itself the sensations of color, sound, taste, hardness and softness, and the like. I am the world's creator.

By way of experiment in this spiritual view of matter, I thrust my finger into my shaving water which has been unexpectedly heated beyond boiling point. There is really no shaving water at all; my spirit, by its peculiar and uncontrollable tendency, produces in some way the sensation of a hot fluid object. Looking at my finger I really do not see it blistered; my spirit subjectively produces the impression of a very red and very throbbing digit. Like a hurt boy, I thrust my finger into my mouth, and the peculiar hot, boiled taste I experience is not the result of my finger acting on my palate; my spirit is alone responsible for the flat, disappointing sensation. Neither water, nor finger, nor burn, nor palate exists.

Put briefly, in the view of the Idealist, souls or spirits

alone exist; matter, such as shaving water and burnt fingers, though they appear to be the object of sense, are just a degree less real than fairy godmothers and Februaries with thirty-one days. Our souls are mighty workshops which by their nature are so constructed as to produce constantly and uniformly the experiences we call sensations. Like spiders, we spin out of our own substance the world in which we live.

Recognizing the tremendous difficulties of this system, certain Idealists while denying the existence of any material, extended objects, hold that God acts directly on the soul, producing thus the modifications which we call sensations.

If ever there was a dark-room, anti-common-sense philosophy, it is this denial of the whole sensible world. As a theory it is simply futile to explain as simple a fact as a falling brick or a scrambled egg, much less Urban's scenery or the Grand Canyon.

Our Idealist decides to visit the Chicago Art Institute to see Breton's "The Song of the Lark." He might, if the soul is the cause of all sensation, save himself the trouble of shaving his wholly spiritual face, and, reclining in his Morris chair, make his spirit produce the masterpiece. But, as a matter of fact, he is aware that a picture as it is really produced by his imagination in the quiet of his room differs from the original more completely than a twelfth carbon copy differs from the upper typewritten sheet, and at least as much as the original picture differs from a living peasant girl and a singing lark.

So he shaves, though shaving is an operation difficult to explain in spirits, and then takes a South Side "L" train—which is most annoyingly and unspiritually noisy to-day—to the Art Institute.

Now how does his soul as it was in his own room differ from his soul in the presence of the picture? If the picture itself is spiritual, it can help not one whit toward the production of the sensations which mark its presence. If his own soul is the cause of that delightful experience which he calls viewing a picture, why could not his soul produce the experience in any place except where the picture seems to be? Why must the enthusiastic student working near him in the gallery journey from San Francisco to see a picture which in all essentials his own soul produces? Why will "generations still unborn" experience this particular picture only where the picture hangs and in no place else? If there is no striking mass of colors and lines called "The Song of the Lark", if M. Breton simply fancied he dabbled in paint, if the Chicago Art Gallery bought something which really has no existence outside of the thinking mind, then certainly men have been playing a gigantic and decidedly exasperating game of make-believe.

We say that the beauty of children is often in the eyes of the parents; the Idealists go it a bit stronger and assert that children really have no faces at all.

A wedding couple travels long miles of rail to spend a few weeks in the Adirondacks where they fish for spiritual fish which they weigh in spiritual scales, climb diaphanous mountains in very tough—I could pun on the "sole"—boots, and return home still dropping intangible rice from non-existing suitcases. Before the tremendous act of creation achieved in the minds of this love-oblivious pair, God's act of creation becomes relatively the act of a careless child. According to the Idealists, not one tremendous being, but two very imperfect beings, and with them all who were present in the

Adirondacks, produced the wonders of sight and sound that made their honeymoon a dream of joy.

More than that; this same creation has been going on since the beginning of time. My mind produces the Rockies; it fills the heavens with stars; it stands with Shakespeare as the author of Hamlet; it is as much the composer of Lohengrin as was Wagner.

If this be true, my whole internal consciousness is a continuous lie; for I never for a moment believe anything of the sort, nor can all the arguments from those of the Neoplatonist down through Fichte and Hegel to Mrs. Eddy ever convince me that it is true.

Columbus stands on the shores of America; and since, according to the Idealist, there is no reality but the thinking *ego* or I, he not only discovers America, he manufactures it. One would like to know whether according to this theory the cells of the human body existed before the microscope discovered them, or the circulation of the blood, or the wonderful process of human generation, or the minute disease germs. If the reader of this article is convinced that it really exists outside of his mind and that I wrote it and not he, then Idealism would hardly be a working system of philosophy for him.

The theory which attributes directly to God the production of sensations without any reality to correspond to them does not in the least save the system. On the contrary, it makes God the greatest deceiver, the most ridiculous scoffer conceivable. According to this theory, God impels us always to believe that we live in a material world, though it does not exist; and he forces us to act according to that belief. We can imagine the Greek Zeus in a fit of Olympic mirth causing some poor mortal to pursue gold which has no reality, to fly terror-stricken

from a bull which his own spirit produces, to water non-existing flower gardens, and to sink peacefully into the imaginary shade of unreal trees. But to hold such a thing regarding the Christian God, as these Idealists do, is simply to make Him a senseless, brutal humorist who uses His creatures for His mirth.

The theory that there is no reality outside of the thinker is so impracticable that a celebrated German philosopher said of it that any man who tried to live according to it would shortly feel something in his brain snap. No amount of argument will convince the most confirmed Idealist that an erupting volcano can be mentally transfigured into a shower-bath. No man would be fool enough to boast to his friends that his mind produced "Intolerance" or composed "Traviata." The best an Idealist can do is use an intangible pen to write books which others will produce as they read them, or from professors' chairs teach bodiless classes in words which are the product of the hearers' spirits. On the same principle, possibly bewildered reader, the bursting shell does not bring about a crumbling fortress; the crumbling fortress produces the bursting shell.

As a youth I remember stumbling over a trick problem in algebra which proved conclusively that after all four equals five. Now four never could equal five, I reasoned; yet there was the proof clear against me. After fruitless effort I carried the problem to a professor of mathematics. He glanced at it casually, and then laid his finger on a certain equation. "There's the flaw," he said; "at that point you begin to multiply zeros. A person can prove anything if he multiplies zeros." And all the arguments of the Idealists are simply a multiplication of zeros.

IV

Our Futuristic Senses

IN the heat of the futurist craze a certain French sculptor, whose death is one of the war's minor tragedies, offered to an astonished world some mussy looking groups in marble. He called them statues, so he unquestionably intended them to be such; but they would have cost Phidias or Angelo sleepless nights. Masses of stone, misshapen, unsymmetrical, yet labeled conventionally "Stags" or "Caritas," they appeared a cross between a half-carved Eskimo totem and a snowman after a sudden thaw.

Then a kindly interpreter, who, by the way, writes futuristic poetry, explained it all. They are not really statues; they are musical compositions in stone. They make their appeal not to the eye but to the ear. Yon heavy mass of marble is a symphony; that dainty triangular bit of porphyry is a waltz; while this nervous bunch of ungainly angles and sharp corners is a fox-trot orchestrated for banjo, saxophone, and traps.

Now as marble when not crashing down a mountain or off a pedestal is obviously incapable of sound, these musical statues presuppose only one thing: a properly trained eye can be made to hear. After that, futurism has nothing further to offer.

About the same time a volume of one of our modern books of knowledge found its way to my armchair. Under "senses" was a diagram in which a number of parallel lines had been placed so as to seem slanting

toward one another, and under the diagram was the brilliant query: "Do our senses deceive us?" There was more than a passing similarity between that diagram and the musical statues.

If our last essay in armchair philosophy arrived at anything, it was the confirmation of our common-sense view that there is a real world of tangible, extended objects outside of ourselves. It is, of course, obvious that we cannot perform the Marsyan feat of getting outside of our own skins to reach this world; instead, we must rely on our senses—our eyes, our ears, our tongue and palate, our noses, and the sensory surface of our skins—to bring us and that world into contact. If, to the question proposed by the editor of the "Book of Knowledge," we must with certain philosophers answer that our senses do deceive us, it would really be better were no such thing as the world to exist. It is better to know nothing about a thing, than to know something that is not true. And if our senses really deceive us, we know something about this beautiful world of color and scent and taste; but that something is absolutely wrong.

Personally I have seen about a dozen ways of proving that the squares of the two sides of a triangle are equal to the square of its hypotenuse; but I have never seen any proof that two and two equal four. I know that the two pencils before me added to my fountain pen and paper cutter make a total of four objects on my desk; yet if someone declined to believe it, I am sure I should not know how to prove it to him. And I am quite ready to admit the difficulty of proving the perfectly obvious proposition that our senses do not deceive us. The best one can hope to do is simply to explain how they cannot possibly do so.

No one who admits the tangible world about us denies that the eyes are by nature intended to see, the ears to hear, the sensory tissues to feel, the tongue and palate to taste, and the nose to smell. That is philosophy as obvious as the philosophy of "As You Like It." "Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?" asked Touchstone of Corin. "No more but that I know the more one sickens the worse he is . . . that the property of rain is to wet and fire to burn . . . that a great cause of the night is the lack of sun." Corin was a right hearty philosopher even in the eyes of Touchstone, and he might have voiced in the same context the truisms about the senses which every one perforce admits.

The question is, do our eyes which were fashioned to reproduce the colors of the world, reproduce them correctly or not? Are the mistakes, which every one admits occur, the result of a natural bent or of some accidental modification which here and now impedes the proper operation of sight? Is it the nature of the senses to reproduce objects correctly or incorrectly? There lies the crux of the whole matter.

If the eyes are made to see, and yet by their very nature are so fashioned that they do not see what they are looking at or see it incorrectly, we have a parallel to a gun that of its nature was never intended to shoot, or to an automobile that was built to stand still. It simply gives the lie to its own nature. The nature of the senses, as all admit, is to sense objects. If, then, by their nature they were so formed that they always sensed objects incorrectly, they would simply not be senses. They would be senses because they were ordained to perceive the material world; they would really not perceive it because they always perceived it incorrectly. Incorrect knowledge is no knowledge at all.

Imagine that some genius fashions a machine which he calls a camera. He offers me his machine and I take it under the impression that it conforms to the nature of all cameras, which is to reproduce the object to which the sensitive plate has been exposed. The first picture I attempt is a bit of marine landscape. I develop the plate and discover that it reproduces just nothing. Having had the same experience before with other cameras, I try again, this time photographing a friend's new and ultra modern roadster. Then, when the plate comes from its developing bath, I find that I have the reproduction of a very old and spavined horse.

In wrath I rush to the inventor. "I thought you said this is a camera!" I bluster. "It is," he replies; "but it is a camera which by its nature either does not reproduce the object at which it is snapped, or else reproduces it differently from what it is." "Then," I retort, tossing the machine deftly at his head, "call it what else you please, but do not call it a camera. A camera which is made not to reproduce objects or not to reproduce them as they are, is simply no camera at all."

On the same principle, a sense that is by nature destined to reproduce objects incorrectly or not to reproduce them at all, may be a subject for an anatomist or a poet, but it is not in any particular a sense. Senses must by nature be ordained to give us correct information about material objects; otherwise they are by no means senses.

The causes which impel philosophers to doubt this obvious fact may be reduced to two classes: They have not taken the normal sense working under normal conditions into consideration, or they use the sense for a purpose for which it was not destined or was destined only secondarily. That probably needs explanation.

No one says a motor boat is imperfect because it will not travel in the air; a man does not give up faith in watches as timekeepers when he finds that his watch needs regulating. Yet with marvelous consistency men jump to the conclusion that their eyes are deceptive when, on looking at a stick thrust into a glass of water, they seem to see it bent quite out of shape; from the color-blindness of one individual, they leap to the conclusion that all eyes are essentially deceptive; they pronounce their eyes imperfect because they fail to do the work of a microscope or high-power telescope.

For any correct judgment about our eyes, we must be sure we are looking through a natural medium. Our eyes are not the eyes of mermen, and the stick in water has passed out of our normal medium which, of course, is ether and air. The color-blindness of a particular person is an accident and as such cannot affect the essential character of vision. And when we maintain that our eyes are not deceptive, our only contention is that the things they report under normal conditions they report correctly. To expect the senses to report everything no matter how minute or how remote is almost like expecting a single mirror to reflect the universe.

Each sense, if we except possibly the sense of touch, has one particular quality in bodies for which it is primarily suited. The eye perceives color; the ear, sound; the nose, odor; the tongue and palate, taste. Put a perfectly colorless body before the eyes and they perceive nothing, unless, of course, the colorless body is made to contrast sharply with a colored body; in which case the eyes perceive a sudden cessation of color where the colorless body has been placed. But like the cowboys in one of O. Henry's yarns who used their gold watches

for quoits, we want our single senses to do much more than report the quality for which they were destined. Like the futuristic sculptor, we want our eyes to hear; like the editor of the "Book of Knowledge," we insist that they tell us all about the direction of lines; and we condemn them outright if they fail us in the task we have set them.

Taking the eyes for our example, we find that the eye in looking at a color perceives that that color terminates at a certain point, where a new color begins. My eye thus perceives that the white of the paper on which I write ends abruptly, and the green of my desk blotter at that point begins. In this way color becomes for me a way of determining shape. But if, from the data given by my eyes alone, I judge the shape of an object, I am certainly very likely to make an incorrect judgment. Color is the quality for which the eye is primarily destined; shape or size falls not merely under the range of sight but of touch as well. And for a safe judgment on the subject of shape or size, the testimony of two senses, not one, is usually required. When two senses have been thus applied, all that has been proved for the correctness of a single sense holds for both. Had the editor of the "Book of Knowledge" in addition to his eyes used his sense of touch on the puzzling parallel lines, he would not have deserved a place with the sculptor of musical statues.

It did not take much acute reasoning to show, in a former essay in armchair philosophy, the ridiculous and self-contradictory pose of a man who professes to doubt everything. Such a sceptic if he acts up to his creed, is bound in an intellectual strait-jacket. Yet one who believes that of their nature his senses deceive him is headed by a straight and level road for this absolute

scepticism. If my senses on which I am ultimately dependent for all my knowledge of the world outside of myself are essentially unreliable, then every tangible fact I have ever experienced, from the conviction that I am grasping a fountain pen to the tremendous scientific edifice which men have built up through years of patient study at microscope and test-tube, is whisked like Aladdin's palace into the realm of unreality. Without infallible senses, we have no right to put faith in the patent facts of life.

Beyond the Realm of Sense

A FEW years ago, just after the scientific hysteria of the "Silly Seventies", it seems to have been philosophical bad form for a person to call his soul his own. Souls were carefully card-indexed for the information of antiquarians, and in their place the world was given the omnipotent and all-explaining cell, the complex association of nerve-fibers, or the brain that secreted thought as the glands secrete saliva. It was all so very simple that there was no further need for a soul. Did not the cell explain life, and did not the complexity of the brain-fibers explain thought? A number of persons retorted very abruptly: "No, they did not!" But the human voice with difficulty makes itself heard amidst a riot of applause, and applause was showered pretty freely on the scientists in the limelight.

So those who believed that a fact is not disproved by screaming violently against it or calling it names, those, in fine, who liked to fancy that they had a spiritual soul to distinguish them from their pet parrot or fox terrier, decided to possess themselves in patience for a time. Now it is becoming recognized that anyone who tucked away his soul in intellectual moth-balls was very fortunate. Souls are getting to be the fashion once more. In fact, they are quite the vogue.

By a soul men have understood a vital principle distinct from matter yet so united to it that soul and body make up but one person. The soul they have regarded

as the thinking-principle and the principle from which flow those actions which we call free. Those who deny souls maintain that besides matter there is just nothing. The brain alone thinks; and as for free-will—well, if they are honest in their materialism, they pass it over with a flippant reference to popular delusions; their only other alternative is to ignore what they cannot begin to explain.

All men stand in wonder before the tremendous capacity of the human intellect. There is something almost overwhelming in the intellectual attainments of men like the giants of the Renaissance. When Da Vinci wrote to the Duke of Milan the list of his abilities, he was not merely eulogizing his own mental powers, he was uttering a panegyric of the human mind. Socrates, who by his own unaided intellect leaped to the idea of a supreme deity, Aristotle and St. Thomas, stripping off the individuating qualities in things to reach deep into their essences, Newton, when he arrived at the universal principle of gravitation, not less than the astronomer who from abstract mathematics attained to a knowledge of stars he never saw, gave instances of the magnificent power of the human intellect.

Are such intellects merely the complex association of nerve-fibers? Do they differ only in their degree of intensity from the faculty of cognition in horses and oxen? That is precisely the point in this essay in arm-chair philosophy. It has always been the claim of the best philosophy that the brain alone does not think; that our intellectual life is such that it cannot proceed from mere matter. For an explanation of thought one needs a spiritual soul, that is, a soul distinct from the material body.

It is quite obvious that all our knowledge begins with what we learn through the senses. But the human intellect does not stop with the bare facts as reported by the senses. On the contrary, it is never satisfied with the information thus gained; it goes far beyond. The intellect knows, for example, not merely that two Pekingese dogs plus their two expensive pups make a kennel of four fine dogs, but it knows that if no such thing as Pekingese pups existed, or, for that matter, if the person thinking were the only material object in the world, two and two would still make four. The intellect has jumped from the concrete puppies to the essential nature of two and two. And the distance is a vast one.

As I walk down the avenue a chauffeur in a fine touring-car stops a few feet ahead of me and picks up two very ragged and very delicate children. This individual act of a kindly man impresses me so much that I murmur to myself, "Courtesy is surely oil on the wheels of progress." My mind, not content with the individual case reported by my senses, has leaped to a generalization; I saw a single act of a kindly man; I think about that highly abstract, that intangible quality of courtesy which no longer fits merely the individual case but all cases where a tender heart prompts men to deeds of unselfish gentleness. I have not been content with the facts my senses reported.

Two litigants fight over a title deed to a piece of uptown property. There is an exchange of words, then of lawyers' visits, a morning with a modern Solomon in check suit and tortoise-shell glasses, and after learned arguments by the lawyers and interrogation of the witnesses, the aforesaid Solomon pronounces that Litigant A has the right to the property. The judge uses the word

"right" casually, believing that everyone in the courtroom understands him; and though not a man present, from his Honor to the tramps who dropped in to get warm, ever saw or heard or tasted anybody's right to anything, Litigant B bows in submission and goes forth to drown his sorrow in the flowing bowl and his attorney's flow of explanation.

Abbott Mendel gathers together the last batch of his hybrid peas from his monastery garden and sits down to put into writing his revolutionary theory of heredity. After all, the number of pea plants he has investigated is relatively small, yet he dares to lay down a law applicable not only to pea plants in his garden but to the pea plants in Asia and Africa that furnished the tables of Confucius or Rameses II, or to plants that will bloom in the year of grace, 2000. And other scientists seizing on this newly discovered law apply it to cocks and dogs and blooded sheep!

The instances used are by no means extraordinary. The mind is constantly employed in acts of just such a character. The fact is that the human mind is practically never satisfied with just what the sense bring it. One sees a mother fondling her first-born and sits down to write a poem on maternal love. Right, justice, morality, things which the senses are simply incapable of seeing, are the subject of our incessant thought and of tremendous import in our ordinary lives. Science would be out of the question were the human mind not capable of passing from the individual specimen under the microscope to the universal law that lies behind.

Thorn bushes will be producing in the normal course of nature a large harvest of grapes long before the senses will be able to produce such intellectual thought. The

mere matter that composes the brain and the senses in the philosophy of the materialists cannot explain the simplest abstract concept. Does the eye ever see the abstract quality of courtesy or of maternal love? The answer to that is simply that there is no such thing existing in matter as abstract courtesy or maternal love. Courteous chauffeurs exist, but courtesy does not; mothers who love their children are, thank Heaven, still brightening the earth, but maternal love is an abstract quality and as such is not found in material creation. The senses, as we know from constant experience, report only the concrete, individual type, the courteous man, the loving mother. There must be another faculty in us which reaches thus to the quality which is found not merely in one particular case, but in all cases of a like nature.

It is simply ridiculous to maintain that our senses can grasp a universal law of nature. Did anyone ever see the law of gravitation, or touch it, or taste it, or hear it? Men have seen apples falling to earth and the scuttled ship sink in the waves, but the law that lies back of these facts they have never subjected to touch or sight or hearing.

As for those tremendous moral facts of truth and honor and duty and civil right which are absolutely essential to the life of man, they have no material essence whatsoever. Fancy asking a policeman to show you his right to regulate traffic! Imagine asking the rulers of a warring European nation to let you see the wound in its national honor! Yet for its honor that nation has plunged itself into a devastating war. For truth a martyr will lay down his life. The right of the traffic policeman will stop the most reckless driver. Here certainly are facts that move the world; and yet not one of them has ever

been touched by our senses. If matter alone existed in man, no amount of nerve-action could ever know anything about them. Matter can only attain to a knowledge of the material; sense can know only the sensible.

History is a long record of that something within man that peremptorily refuses to be satisfied with mere matter or with bodies. The very fact that a man is constantly arguing over the question of souls is enough to show that his intellect will not rest with the material. If merely our brains think, then the idea of a soul, which is a substance without extension or any of the attributes of matter, would never occur to it. It could only imagine the things it has perceived or things like them, and it has never perceived anything save extended, tangible matter.

And that something within man which will not rest content with matter has throughout the history of all races been rising to a Being far transcending the realms of sensitive experience: God. Men have never seen nor heard God with their senses, yet men's intellects have been either admitting Him or disputing about Him from the least known days of old. The very infidel who denies God's existence knows what is contained in the idea of deity. To rise to such an ultra-sensitive idea something more than mere matter is required. Without a soul the thought of God is simply inexplicable.

VI

Necessary Egotism

WHEN dear old Rip roused himself from his rather protracted nap and stroked his unaccustomed white beard, he thought at once of his home and of the probable reception that awaited him there; and then he wondered mildly if he had not better wait until it grew dark before returning to his muscular dame with her sharp tongue and her ready broom-stick. In reality, years had passed since he left that home; but for him the days of his vagabond youth with all their associations of cavernous pockets and tempestuous wife, of elfish bowling clubs and vast draughts of exhilarating liquor lay within easy reach of memory. He was, as far as he knew, the same old Rip that had taken his gun and his dog up into the Catskills, though his garments were tattered beyond recognition and the gun at his side had evidently been substituted by puckish gamins for his own fowling-piece. About it all there was a certain overwhelming strangeness, but the one thing of which he was quite sure was that he was the same Rip Van Winkle who yesterday or the day before at latest had lain down to rest.

That is a strange link which binds the feeble old man on his last bed with the same man as a child at his mother's knee. Rip was unique merely in that he skipped the entire period of his middle age. He went to sleep a fresh, blooming hunter and awoke a doddering relic. But for most men the various epochs of life dissolve gradually into one another. Childhood slips into youth; youth

glides imperceptibly into manhood; manhood ripens and reaches a full maturity, and then begins the gradual descent toward that bed on which the eventful last scene is played. Shakespeare's seven ages are really not acts bounded at each end by a rising and falling curtain; they are rather one long act in which, in various costumes, a single actor plays his several roles. The realization of one personal identity throughout links the life of today with the life of yesterday, or of last year, or of twenty or fifty years ago.

The old man can no more shake off this consciousness that he and the child of five that bore his name are identically the same person, than he can shake off his head by diligent nodding. When a man of business takes a week off to run down to "the old home," he looks fondly at the orchard where he, then a lad in overalls and a torn shirtwaist, his feet innocent of shoes, stole the forbidden green apples. He boasts that he could, in those happy days of unconscious digestion, eat more than any boy in his "neck of the woods"; he tells how single-handed he licked a bully ten years old; and though, when the old folk bring out a faded tintype of a very stiff and frightened youth in short-long trousers and a blouse starched like a strait-jacket, he screams with enjoyment at the thought that that puny youngster was once himself, he has not the slightest doubt that he and the frightened youth are the very same person.

The surviving members of the class of '57 are entertained by the alumni association. Smith, aged eighty-one, egged on by his fellow-antiquities, brags that in his day he was the swiftest runner in his college; "beat Harvard, by Jove, in the 100 at 11 flat." And though the dear old chap could not beat a snail if the snail give him

a handicap, no one doubts that this is the one-time champion.

That tremendous sense of personal identity linking the man of the present with the man of the past has its grim features as well. What has this prim, passionless professional man, diffusing wisdom and majestic decorum from his very presence, to do with the hot-blooded, impetuous youth who, in a moment of wild, blinding passion, flung a trusting soul headlong to ruin? Yet in the quiet of his room where no eye sees, wisdom and decorum fall from him like a loose glove, and conscience flings into his quivering face the crime of his distant youth.

This identity of personality is absolutely necessary for whole classes of intellectual operations. The composition of the *Canterbury Tales* took Chaucer some twenty years, but through that entire period he never lost sight of the single plan that he had formulated in the very beginning. And today it would be simply impossible for any man to take up the incomplete work as Chaucer left it and carry it to the conclusion which Chaucer clearly had in mind.

Or take the physicist who is employed on some delicate experiments covering reams of paper and years of time. Suppose that there were no identity of person there, that from day to day the experimenter could not recognize that he was the one who performed these experiments yesterday and the day before. It is obvious that any completion of the experiments would be impossible. He must recognize the steps which he took to reach the present point in his problem; he must be able, without any break in the sequence, to bring his results from the first equation to the final answer; he must be in a position at the conclusion of his experiments to grasp the problem as a single, logical whole. And because the physicist is

conscious of his identity with the man who began and continued the experiments, its ultimate solution is more than merely possible.

Everyone from his own experience knows that he is the same person throughout the longest and most varied life. Baby, boy, lover, soldier, justice, grandfather, ancient, he is absolutely the same individual. To brand such a universal and necessary conviction as a delusion is to incur the righteous laughter of those with common-sense. Yet without a soul distinct from the body, it is simply impossible to explain this perception of identity. With a soul, the problem is relatively simple.

Suppose we take first the materialistic attitude that there is nothing in a man but his body. At some time in our lives we have all been amused at finding out the enormous quantities of food we consume in the course of a normal year. We realize, though, the significance of this apparent voracity when we learn that the simplest action of muscle or nerve literally burns up our bodies as a locomotive burns coal. We live like the old-time racing steamboats on the Mississippi, by consuming ourselves as fuel; so much so, that in the course of every seven years, conservative scientists maintain, we have completely changed every nerve and muscle and bone in our bodies. In the case of the brain the destruction and rebuilding is much more rapid. Americans who live at high pressure probably renew their brain-cells faster than anyone else.

If, then, nothing exists but our bodies, our conviction, ineradicable though it may be, that we are the same persons today that we were seven years ago is simply false. We have nothing but our bodies, and our bodies have been changed as we changed our coats and hats. The child, with its fresh, pink skin, its sensitive nerves, and

its resilient bones, is no more the sage, with his wrinkled, parchment skin, his dulled senses and his brittle bones, than the baby's beribboned shoes are the sage's carpet slippers. If there is no soul, unchanged substantially during all the changes of the body, to link together this ever decaying, ever renewing "mansion of flesh," we have no greater fool than the man of seventy who feels himself the same person as the child of seven, the youth of seventeen, the bridegroom of twenty-seven. As a matter of fact, he has been a new personality every seven years.

Absurd as materialism is, the modern theory of a world-soul is a very dark shade more ridiculous. Briefly put, the theory is this: There are no individual souls; instead there is one huge soul which, like Lake Michigan flowing through the hydrants of Chicago, trickles through the individual brain in a stream of thought. To use the favorite figure, the world of men is a great stained-glass window through which the cosmic mind flings its thoughts as the sun flings its rays. The thoughts, of course, receive their individual character from the brain through which they seep, just as the rays of the sun are colored differently by the individual bits of glass. But the person does not think; the world-soul thinks, and a man can be said to have a soul only in so far as the thoughts of the world-soul filter through his brain. There is no thinker; only thoughts! Some philosophers would be saved if they only had a sense of humor.

For here is confusion confounded and compounded. My body is constantly changing, but so are my thoughts. The only permanent thing is a world-soul which is not mine. My body is not permanent; my soul is as common as a public drinking-fountain, and my thoughts are considerably less durable than the fountain's flowing water.

I have a constant conviction of my personal identity, though really the thinking principle in me is in no way personal to me and is as much the property of every man in town as the air or the sidewalk. As for my thoughts they just "roll along."

In other words, the idea of a world-soul gives the lie to my conviction of my individuality because I share it in common with Tom, Dick, and Harry, not to mention Ah Sing and Uncle Mose. The succession of thoughts renders impossible any explanation of a continuous personality, for even supposing that Thought Two knows all about Thought One, and Thought Three knows both One and Two, yet, when I go to sleep, I make it a point to stop thinking, and the chain of thoughts is nicely riven in twain. A fine way for a person to break with the past under this theory would be to take an anesthetic.

As a matter of fact, we could not run our world unless, besides this mere belief in personal identity, there were actually in every man something that kept him identically the same. Unless the thief, the murderer, the wife-deserter, arrested years after the crime, were absolutely identical with the man who committed the crime, all the judges from the supreme bench to the courtroom of Alice's Wonderland could not punish the offense. A lapse of seven years under the materialistic theory or a single change of mind under the successive thoughts theory would make a man irresponsible for his contracts, would annul all the marriages in the land, turn fathers into persons quite unrelated to their children, and set our little earth completely on its head.

Fortunately we do not manage affairs on such theories as these. All the while we dispute about it, we presuppose something in a man that makes him responsible

for all the acts of a lifetime, that binds him to his contracts through years of time, that keeps him in precisely the same relationship to father or children or wife. That something is nothing else than an unchanging soul which is distinct from the changeable body, and is the cause of fleeting thought.

VII

The Pilot of the Soul

CONSISTENCY may be a jewel, but unfortunately jewelry is regarded as frivolous ornamentation in certain philosophical circles. It is, of course, as ridiculous for philosophers who deny a personal soul to talk of free-will as it is for a turtle to brag of its wings. Yet some of them do it. When, at the cloakroom of the philosophical halls, they checked their souls, they renounced all right to any real freedom of choice; for chemical and physical forces, beyond which, according to their theory, there is nothing else, are governed by laws as fixed as the courses of the stars. The loose boulder on the mountain top is not free to whip itself suddenly toward the sun. The early crocus is not free to withhold its bloom, as a woman might withhold her spring hat, until exactly Easter morning. Man, if he has no soul, is, like the boulder or the crocus, made up simply of chemical and physical forces which know no freedom of choice.

There are, however, many materialists who recognize that their philosophy has left no breathing space for free-will. Matter is not free; man is but soulless matter; and so, when brought face to face with the fact of free-will, like Tito Melema and his unwelcome father, they simply deny the fact. Man is not free, they say; the glorious power of choosing one's own course is

simple illusion, a vain flattery with which man has salved his own self-conceit. Like the lightning and the wind, the plough-horse and the gasoline engine, man has not the slightest power over his own actions.

Consequently, if we prove that man has a free will, we prove that there is something in him besides mere chemical and physical forces, a something which is not governed by the laws of matter, and which we call the soul.

Dogberry to the contrary notwithstanding, comparisons have their use, and we can get an idea of our free-will by comparing it with the action of our intellect. A class in geometry sits fidgeting before an unsolved problem on the blackboard. Step by step the instructor leads them through a labyrinth of parallel lines and acute angles and hypotenuses until at length he sets before them a completely satisfactory answer. A sigh from the class, and they settle back calmly in satisfied acquiescence. Brought face to face with any truth clearly and evidently proposed, the intellect is simply forced to accept it.

But suppose we take a business man at his desk in the late morning of a summery Saturday. An afternoon in the office will mean clinching the good-will of a rather desirable buyer; yet through the window comes a delicious breeze elusively suggestive of greens and bunkers and long stretches of undulating sward. Here are two things, either of which he knows to be desirable; and he vacillates to the rhythm of his swaying desk-chair. Then with a sudden gesture he piles his correspondence in a heap, bangs down his desk cover, swings the golf bag from its place in the corner over his shoulder, and heads whither the breezes call. Brought face to face with two attractive possibilities, he deliberately chooses

one and rejects the other simply because he wishes for golf more than he does for the good-will of this particular customer.

That faculty which freely determines to select out of a number of possible attractions one particular thing, we call the free-will. Calmly and quietly, a man considers a certain plan; he weighs motives for its accomplishment and dwells on those motives which militate against it; he recognizes that it will be a good thing for him, and yet that it has its disadvantages; and in the end, with all this before him, he is free to choose or reject it, to act or to remain inert just as he wishes and because he wishes.

Our commonest conscious actions are proof positive of this freedom of choice. The alarm-clock rings in the morning; the sleeper knows that he ought to rise promptly; yet instead, he flings a shoe at the clock and rolls over for another quarter of an hour. At last he rises, rubbing his chin regretfully. Really, he ought to shave; still—"Oh, let's get it done during lunch hour." "*Journal* or *Herald*?" queries the newsboy. The purchaser hesitates; the *Journal* has a "bully" sporting page, but the war news in the *Herald* is always—"Give me a *Journal*," and he bolts for the L train. Freedom? Why in the simplest conscious actions, from the selection of a cigarette or a necktie to the choice of a candidate for President, man is aware of this sovereignty of choice, this power to cast a thing aside or to take it to his innermost heart.

By way of contrast there are plenty of facts over which we know that we have no control. A man blessed with a normal appetite does not worry whether he can digest his dinner or not; he has nothing to say about it. He

does not fuss because his beard grows in spite of his dislike of shaving; all the worry in the world will not stop the growth of a tough beard. We know quite clearly the facts in life that depend on our choice and those we are incapable of touching, and incidentally we recognize there the difference between actions dominated by free-will and those which we cannot influence.

How explain, if man is not free, the elaborate machinery he has built up for his guidance when he has to settle on a choice in affairs of real import? Does the man about to embark on a new business enterprise feel himself physically forced into it as a root is forced willy-nilly through the hard soil? If so, the careful counting of possible expenses and receipts, the consultation with Bradstreet and Dun, the anxious hours with lawyers and banking agents are all parts of an elaborate self-deception. The same necessity which drags the thrown rock downward toward the earth, forces the man without free-will into a particular business.

One striking difference between man and his animal servants is the fact of remorse. A chicken through some hennish freak pecks to death all the yellow chicks in her brood. Still, not the most sentimental humanizer of animals fancies Mistress Hen haunted through long nights by terror-inspiring phantoms of the chicks she has slain. But the world is never without its Gretchens.

Indeed, looking back over his life, a man becomes conscious of the thousand things he could have done and did not do, and of the thousand other things he did in the face of outraged conscience. A denial of free-will makes the fact of remorse another of those unsolved mysteries. Why should Trynan in Eliot's tre-

mendous sketch feel the sword turn in his soul when he looked into the painted face of the dying girl he had ruined? In that very agony of remorse, he was admitting the fact that he might have saved that girl's soul, and instead he had deliberately flung it down to destruction.

In our past lives we recognize two distinct classes of actions: those for which we are responsible and those over which we have had no control. Two friends on a hunting excursion leap from a canoe, gun in hand; one of them slips, his gun spits lead, and his companion falls face downward. There is agony of soul in the survivor, dread of facing the relatives of the slain man, but withal a saving sense of innocence. He has not lost the right to look even the mother of the dead man in the eye. But suppose as he stepped from that canoe he had shot down his companion coolly and deliberately. In that case precisely the same effect would have followed, his companion would have dropped lifeless to the earth. Between that and the death we call accidental there would have been one only difference: in the second case the shot would have been intended, and freely, deliberately fired. Free-will had entered in.

As for the elaborate system of medals and awards with which civilized men recompense their heroes, they are simply another contribution to the gayety of nations unless the actions which they reward are freely done. Medals are not hung on a tree because it served as a shelter for a daring sharpshooter; a drunkard is not treated as a hero because he fell from an upper window and killed the general of the enemy's army as he passed through the streets below. A hero is rewarded for a brave act, simply because he was not obliged to do it.

He shares in some slight degree in the praise St. Paul tendered to Christ: having death set before Him, He chose the cross despising the shame.

The defenders of free-will by no means maintain that the will acts without adequate motive. But most emphatically we maintain that the object which furnishes a motive for a choice is not necessarily the best presented for consideration, has not, considered in itself, qualities preëminent over those of other objects. Put a bit of iron between two magnets, and it flies inevitably toward the magnet which has the greater attractive force. Put a man between two objects, and the object which he chooses will not necessarily be the better; it will be the one which he wants. A man will refuse a fortune to spite a relative he hates; like Cyrano he will fling his whole month's income on the stage for the sake of a fine gesture. The ultimate reason for his action will be because his free-will has chosen so to act.

Readers of Joseph Conrad will remember how Captain MacWhirr guided the *Nan-Shan* through the terrors of the Typhoon on the China Sea. Conrad, in one of those gripping descriptions, sums up the taciturn skipper's battle with the elements.

Jukes could no longer see his captain distinctly. The darkness was absolutely piling itself up upon the ship. At most he made out movements, a hint of elbows spread out, of a head thrown up. Captain MacWhirr was trying to do up the top button of his coat with unwonted haste. The hurricane that has the power to madden the seas, to sink ships, to uproot trees, to overturn strong walls, and dash the very birds of the air to the ground, had found this taciturn man in its path, and, doing its utmost, had managed to make him loquacious. Before the renewed wrath of the winds swooped on the ship Captain MacWhirr found time

to declare, in a tone of vexation as it were: "I wouldn't like to lose her."

For the hurricane had hurled its force against the strongest power in the created world, a man's free-will; and material force fell helpless before the power of that spiritual faculty.

VIII

Dynamiting the Moral World

THE question of Shakespeare's religion will for all time delight the sophomoric debater. But whether Catholic or not, Shakespeare was heir of a Catholic principle which is the motif of his greatest tragedies, the principle of personal responsibility. It is a free step deliberately taken which starts his Macbeth and his Lear down the sharp incline toward destruction. In this he differs from the old Greek tragedians whose heroes were overshadowed by a compelling fate, a fearful and inexplicable Até which plunged them struggling and protesting into final ruin.

Our modern dramatists do not believe in the Greek fate; but, on the other hand, many of them write as if they did not believe in the power of free-will. In place of the traditional conflicts of wills, we have among the moderns contests of the individual with environment, heredity, his own fierce passions, economic conditions; and the will is ultimately displayed as powerless in the face of the foes arrayed against it. When the hero, or more usually the heroine, falls, we do not blame or pity; we merely accept the inevitable.

The denial of free-will is not an unimportant bit of dramatic machinery nor a piece of fine philosophical cobweb spinning. It is one of those denials which, if logically followed out, would shake the foundations of the universe. For centuries men have been trained, when trained at all, to fight against the allurements of what

under accepted morality was called sin. Youths were taught to stand firmly against their own personal wishes and inclinations where a higher duty to God or country or fellow-men was in question. The wishy-washy principle of our sentimental novelists that a man or woman must follow every whim and fancy, especially in matters of sex, never made any man lay down his life for his country or caused any woman to pluck from her heart a guilty passion. The line of least resistance has not been the road leading to heroic glory. Precisely by accepting the things that bring physical and mental anguish, precisely by resisting the attractions that almost tear the heart from the breast have heroes and saints attained their eminence. And all this is swept away in a denial of free-will.

For if a man has no free-will, he must of his very nature follow the line of least resistance. Chemical and physical forces cannot act otherwise. When Jack and Jill fell down the hill, they probably, in an unwritten sequel, picked themselves up and, broken crowns notwithstanding, went up for a second pail of water. But the spilled water, taking the line of least resistance, flowed with iron necessity to the foot of the hill and stayed there. It was not free to mount after the clumsy pair. Send an electrical current through an iron and a copper wire, and you can measure with mathematical accuracy the percentage of the charge that will flow through each; and the greater amount will always flow through the copper wire. Without free-will man can no more avoid the line of least resistance than can water or electricity.

The logical consequence of this denial of free-will would startle any but the most wilful dogmatist. There are moments in each man's life when everything inside

of him and outside of him seems to fight for an object he knows he must not touch. Every fiber of his nature cries aloud for it; a malignant chance has thrown it in his way; he can take it while avoiding the consequences which attend most wrong-doing. Yet one faint, blurred, sometimes almost inconsequential factor—like Kitchner's picture in the "Unfinished Story"—holds him back; that and a sense that the power of choice is in his own hands. Suddenly some philosopher whispers that he is not free, that he must follow the line of least resistance. Who can doubt in such a case whither leads the line of least resistance? Who can blame him if the conviction that he is not free sends him whirling toward the longed-for object?

After all, why should he not? Without freedom of will, it is ludicrous nonsense to talk of responsibility for one's acts. The parrot is not responsible for its hair-raising profanities; the lightning is not blamed when it blasts a mother with her week-old baby nor praised when it brings the usurper's palace crashing about his throne. Unless a man who does evil is free to do good, unless the saint who lays down his life in a leper colony is free to stay at home with his feet in carpet-slippers, the wife-beater and the savior of his country, the betrayer of innocence and the Sister of Charity, the murderer and the martyr, Nero and St. Paul, Lucrezia Borgia and Joan of Arc, Benedict Arnold and Washington differ in no moral essential. On the contrary, since the dawn of history, men have been sending to prison, the lash, and the gallows fellow-men for the thefts, the arsons, and the murders for which they were in no way responsible. Our whole criminal code from preamble to final clause is a vast and hideous hoax at the expense of human nature.

Just what the world would become were all men suddenly to throw over their sense of responsibility is a picture no imagination cares to attempt. Even were it true a thousand times that this free-will is a vain delusion, men would be forced in self-defense to use this delusion to build up in themselves and in others a sense of personal responsibility. Without it the sins of Sodom and the crimes of Caligula would write themselves with terrifying iteration into the ordinary history of the world.

It is pitiable beyond words to see philosophers teaching young people a doctrine which is applicable to life only in so far as from it one learns how not to live. It is hard enough for youth to fight back the hot surgings of passion, to close eager eyes to the fascinating sin which beckons so alluringly, even when he feels that should he consent he is personally responsible for the evil that will follow. If, on the contrary, he is told that wild oats are the necessary fruitage of life's springtime, that broken hearts and blighted hopes are the inevitable wreckage of passion's resistless flood, it is madness to blame him for flinging to the winds this hampering delusion of personal responsibility.

If the professors of such a philosophy really practised their creed, the jail not the classroom would be their proper habitat. Happily, if they are moral men, they really prove throughout their lives the truth that man is distinguished from soulless matter and from the brute creation precisely in this, that he deliberately chooses the things which are hard and rejects calmly and coolly the line of least resistance. A very large portion of their lives, like the life of every mortal, is spent in learning by sheer force of will to control the natural impulses banned by morality or by the necessary conventions of

civilized society. Certainly the hard patient life of a student is incomparably less attractive to young blood than a free, self-indulgent existence; yet they have chosen the student's life largely because, being so hard, it leads to the fame which they have set as the goal of their ambitions. They feel a thousand times in their lives the desire for rest and comfort and luxury; yet they set all aside because it impedes them on their way to their goal. And though man clings with an almost insuperable longing to his own life, few of them would hesitate, should their country call them, freely to lay down that precious life for the sake of a national peace and prosperity which they will never enjoy.

Free-will lies so deeply at the root of our moral life that its destruction would send our universe reeling. Good and evil, innocence and guilt—the burden of so much of our literature, the scales in which we weigh our associates—are terms which without it become as meaningless as the gibbering of apes. Deny it as he may, the philosopher of slave-will could not avoid the penitentiary, retain the friendship of a single individual, merit a line of praise from an educational journal or the warm hand-clasp from a grateful pupil, unless he was constantly giving the lie to his own doctrine by an incessant use of personal freedom. He never argues more strongly for free-will than when he employs it to dynamite the moral world.

In the matter of free-will as elsewhere, Shakespeare was writing out of the great heart of humankind. The modern dramatist bases his dramatic thesis on the morbid, the pathological, the neurotic individual; Shakespeare drew his men and women from all time. And Shakespeare was right. When the warning bell for the final curtain

on each man's life is sounded, the protagonist, looking backward through his little play, will see that he it was who determined whether life should end as a comedy or a tragedy. Environment, heredity, passions were with him, acting on the stage; but it was his free-will that wove them into their fitting parts in his life's drama and wrote the final lines.

IX

The Eternal Whence?

INTELLECTUAL life is a history profusely punctuated with question marks. When a child lifts a puzzled face to his father and propounds his first why, intellectual life for him has really begun. And as long as a man continues to use the rising vocal inflection and besprinkle his conversation and his thoughts with a liberal scattering of interrogation points, no matter what his years or his infirmities, he is still very much intellectually alive. For thought would almost cease were it not for the question mark. Now, like an automatic, it is leveled at nature forcing her to yield up her most jealously guarded secrets. Now, like a steam shovel, it digs deep into the foundations of things, giving us philosophy. Now, like a lever, it dares to pry up a little corner of that curtain which shuts off mortal vision from what may lie beyond. The question mark is the spark plug in our intellectual motor, the condiment in our mental cuisine.

It is an historical fact that just this ubiquitous question mark following on a monosyllable "whence" has driven every race of men to acknowledge a Being they call supreme. The least civilized races have had intellectual life sufficient to formulate that inevitable whence with its inevitable answer; while the more civilized peoples have answered their question with the temples of Karnac and Olympus and the Capitoline and Jerusalem, with the cathedrals of Reims and Canterbury and

Cologne. All men, as they looked out over this tremendous world have asked whence, and the only satisfactory answer has been: From a supreme Being beyond and above this world who made it and rules it. The name men gave that Being is aside from the question. It is His existence that alone solves the riddle hidden in that whence.

The fact that a vast majority of all men in all times have been forced to bend their intellects before a supreme Deity is in itself a most powerful argument for the existence of such a Being. For only the intellectual waster flings to the winds the cherished convictions which have satisfied the minds and consoled the hearts of the world's greatest geniuses. But my argument is taken from the nature of the world as it exists about us. For the rational mind, even when untouched by the light of faith, cannot fail to see in the world a clear reflection of some power above and beyond it. The world is the handglass of the Deity.

There seems to have been a time in history when men believed that they had exhausted the possibilities of science. Every savant possessed encyclopedic knowledge. He had memorized the information or misinformation which previous ages had committed to writing, and there was simply nothing more to be said on the subject. A man might be at the same time an accomplished physicist and metaphysicist, a mathematician and astronomer, an alchemist and botanist, confident the while that he knew quite all the world had to teach him in each branch of knowledge.

But in that respect at least, the world has grown very modest. Men used to study the universe; now they specialize on a ray of light. A tiny fragment of one of

the great branches of science is now enough to absorb the exhausting and exhaustive study of a lifetime, for man through his microscope and telescope has begun to realize the tremendous and undreamed-of complexity and magnitude of the universe.

To the ancient Assyrian watching the stars from the temple roof, the universe seemed gigantic; but to the modern astronomer, it is just this side of infinite. Yet quietly and undisturbed, these gigantic masses, sun, planets, whole solar systems, swing through their measureless cycles, clicking off the days and the centuries and the aeons with a precision which the most accurate chronometer pitifully imitates; and on our own little planet, season follows season, each with its myriad mysteries, lawbound, definite in its purpose.

Only the professional pessimist denies the order of the universe. Of course no sane philosopher or scientist claims for the world an absolute perfection; in fact, he emphatically denies it. It is, consequently, possible for fanatics like Haeckel, by focusing their microscopes on the imperfections of some deformed sea-urchin and deliberately shutting their eyes to the unfathomed perfections of the solar system or the human organism, to fling sarcastic jibes at the world's order. As well say there is no beauty in Angelo's "Last Judgment" because in places the wall has cracked.

Admitting even the many defects and admitting, too, that science has yet to learn the purpose of many seemingly useless things, one can go through life sublimely convinced that no stray planet will crash into our world, that crop will follow crop, and living things will be born in pursuance of some definite scheme. As a matter of fact, order is so universal that from crystals and cocci to

mountains and mastodons we have the bases of systematic sciences, each with fixed laws, each bound up with two unquestionable facts, matter and force. Whence, then, the universal world's order? Three solutions suggest themselves: it comes either from chance, from the essential nature of matter and force, or from some directive intelligence.

Listen, I prithee, to a fairy tale. Once upon a time, a certain humorous giant decided to build something, he did not much care what. So up to the top of the mountain he lugged vast quantities of mortar and stone and iron and wood and nuts and bolts and wheels and springs and water and gasolene and fire. Then he sat him down and upon the plain below he playfully tossed great handfuls of his materials. A truly humorous giant this! At last he exhausted his supply, and then into the valley he strode, where, wonderful to relate, he found his mortar and stone and iron and wood had formed themselves into a wonderful city with fair streets and stately buildings, with bridges and car lines; while the gasolene was running the engines which had been formed of his nuts and bolts and wheels and springs; and over the fire water was boiling in preparation for his tea. That is a real fairy tale, and, curious reader, you must not ask where he got the mortar and stone and iron and wood and nuts and bolts and wheels and springs and water and gasolene and fire.

The ancient rhetoricians demanded that an allegory be clear as crystal; I am trusting that mine would not have made any of them shudder. In any case, chance as an explanation of the universe makes the cosmology of a headhunter seem scientifically adequate. Originally everything was chaos; then, just by accident, stars began to form, and planets to revolve, and grass to grow, and

birds to fly; until, by a final and crowning accident man was formed and began to think. That is nonsense unworthy of a serious man. Chance does not explain how order once entered the universe, and it is simply incapable of accounting for the still more remarkable fact that for ages and ages order has continued to reign.

Matter and force have during the last century been used as twin levers in an attempt to lift the Creator out of the universe. According to the theophobic scientists matter and force are eternal. By their essential, necessary nature they have been working together until they have given us the universe as it is today. Together they made the universe with its wonderful order which regulates our watches and inspires our poetry. And they have been everlastingly at it. Simple, is it not?

The theory rather puts to blush our old adage that practice makes perfect. Matter and force in this staggering postulate have been eternally, that is, without any beginning, working toward perfection. And yet, after an eternity of practice they have not reached anything like absolute perfection. In an unlimited amount of duration they have achieved a limited amount of perfection, though they should have reached absolute perfection ages ago. On the contrary, the present imperfection of the universe indicates with absolute certainty that matter and force began to evolve the universe at some definite time. Put it as far back as you like; none the less the eternal duration of matter and force falls with an appalling thud.

Yet for all that they have only been working for a limited time, they really have put a marvelously intricate order into the universe. The question, then, which naturally arises is: did matter and force, when they set out to evolve the universe, know what they were doing, or did they act without knowledge?

To suppose that this order was introduced without any knowledge of what was being done is as ridiculous as an appeal to chance. Let us suppose that when the last exquisite building had been added to the Acropolis of Athens, some one had rushed up and clasped the architect's hand. "It is almost divine!" he cried. The architect then stood back and looked at the buildings which have been the despair of all subsequent builders. "It is marvelous," he remarked; "and do you know, all the time we were working on them, no one in this world knew what they were going eventually to be?" Matter and force, according to this second alternative, have been working diligently until they have accomplished the present order of the universe, though all the while no one in this world had any idea what their labor was all about. An intelligent child would turn up a contemptuous nose at such nonsense.

And even to the scientist who does not want God, the idea is so absurd that we are gravely informed that matter and force are really acting intelligently all the while. So electricity and rocks and fire and the falling seed and hydrogen and the star nebula really think. The tiny atoms of oxygen and iron and cobalt, the forces of gravity and affinity and centrifugal motion set out with a definite plan in their non-existent heads, and while men, hitherto supposed to have the intellects par-excellence, were vainly trying to discover how it was all coming about, these factors actually mapped out the universe and made it according to the plan.

The "Arabian Nights" with its thinking horses and talking birds has nothing comparable to this. Matter thinks; force plans. How proud a bit of gold must be when it finds itself made into a magnificent watch; and

how delighted the explosive power of gasolene must be when it is driving an imported limousine.

Perhaps my paper on idealism sounded absurd, but as a matter of fact what really lies back of this "thinking matter" is a denial of all matter. Many of the scientists who talk of thinking matter mean that matter really does not exist. Only thought exists; thought evolves itself into appearances which we call matter. Fortunately we don't have to waste more mental labor on that precious philosophical legerdemain.

The order of the universe is a fact as unquestionable as mother love, or the multiplication tables, or an aching tooth. Chance could not have produced it, nor could matter and force if left to themselves. We have only one remaining alternative, a directive intelligence. Here at length is common-sense. If the order displayed in a clock or a mouse-trap or a torpedo or a linotype could not come into existence without some one to plan it down to the most minute details, it is perfectly ludicrous to talk of the order of the universe, so complex, so constant in its manifestations, unless there is implicitly admitted an intelligence which conceived it and directed it in accordance with a definite plan.

And if the human mind is still struggling to understand the order of the universe, what must we think of the tremendous intellect which introduced this order where otherwise chaos would reign? Men may differ in the names they apply to this intellect, but they cannot but stand in awe before its gigantic proportions. And though as yet I have not proved its personal character, I shall feel justified when, in these essays in armchair philosophy, the words again occur, in spelling Directive Intelligence with capital letters.

A God of Contradictions

IF ever a philosophy seemed to pour gratifying unction on man's vain soul, that philosophy is pantheism. For while golden calves and gods of green jade may do for occasional idolatry, as a consistent and wholly adorable idol none can compare with oneself. Pantheism assures its votaries, with a flattery that would have gained a smile from Caligula, that we are gods.

Under various names pantheism has floated up in the mystical poetry and unintelligible theology of the East. It is a scientific hypothesis under the name of monism. Mrs. Eddy taught it, though all the while disclaiming it, as Christian Science. And even Bernard Shaw, who likes to believe that he thinks the thoughts no man ever thought before, is a whimsical if diluted pantheist. The theory is essentially the same in all cases: all is god. There is only one substance in the universe, a divine essence, and we are all of that essence, and as such, ourselves divine. Will someone kindly light me a bit of incense?

As soon as a person makes up his mind that there is only one kind of substance in the world, he finds that he has to give up either matter or spirit. It is a hard renunciation, but the pantheist makes it bravely. According to the materialistic pantheist, God is identified with the hydrogen and the gold and the sunflower and the elephant and the college professor and the street-sweeper, and if you put them all together and run them all through a strainer, you would not find a single bit of spirit in the lot. Wrong, says the idealistic pantheist; nothing

exists save one great world-spirit which manifests itself in different forms as men and mountains and puppies and pineapples. Matter is a delusion; it is the all-spirit manifesting itself. That is small consolation for the troop that has to charge a machine-gun company. Bullets are such a painful sort of delusion.

Now if, charitable reader in an armchair, you wish to give up your soul and with it your free-will, you have my leave to fraternize with the materialistic pantheist. But souls are precious things, if one looks for the slightest essential difference between the pebble which the genius in a moment of abstraction flings into a lake and the genius himself whose intellectual gifts blossom forth in a supreme poem or a masterpiece in marble. With the materialistic pantheist pebble and poem and poet are just the same kind of substance in various stages of complexity, nothing more.

Besides, this form of pantheism destroys, with a quiet and effective conclusiveness, all idea of a Designer or Architect of the universe. You do not expect the undeveloped intellect of a baby to be able to design a new cathedral; and it is folly to think that the Intellect which put order and plan into the unguessed reaches of our heavens could have elaborated this vast scheme until it had reached a marvelous state of development. On the contrary, says the materialistic pantheist, the intellect which designed my world is identical with the world it designed; hence it can reach perfection only after the various parts of the universe have been evolved into an exact order and harmony. So even were such matter as sticks and stones able to think, the intellect would be in no condition to plan out its intricate perfection until after it had reached a point where its plan had

already been executed. It is much as if the San Francisco Exposition not only evolved its own order and beauty but, while doing so, actually evolved the intellect of the architect who designed it. And does it not seem a little strange that man, who has the highest intellect in the world, not only cannot plan and order the universe, but actually cannot understand it with anything like comprehensiveness?

Personally, I prefer to be soundly asleep before I start to dream. I should be loath to think that I am dreaming all my waking hours, wandering through a vast world of delusions and unrealities, flying from poison and from wild beasts—which are merely the divine spirit in one of its manifestations—and craving for food and the comradeship of faithful friends—which are merely the divine spirit in another of its deluding manifestations. If, after all, the only substance in the world is the all-spirit, as the idealistic pantheists maintain, then we are poor fools who wander in a world of ghosts and hug to our heart of hearts shadows less real than the images one weaves from smoke. For it wipes out everything that we, in accord with our common sense, call material, branding all matter as utter delusion.

Pantheism, no matter of what brand, certainly does not leave much room for real individuality. In fact, it makes individuality simply impossible. For if we are all identified in one great undivided essence we are really not individuals at all, but inseparable and unseparated parts of the one divine being. And since we are identical with God, we are also identical with one another, for I believe that there is an axiom that two things equal to a third thing are equal to each other, is there not? If that is the case, I am not only myself, but Fainting Bertha and

Percy MacKaye and Jess Willard and George V as well, at which statement one feels inclined to shriek with laughter. Indeed, one can get a gleam of grim humor out of the terrible war by trying to imagine how the people of the Central Powers, who are really essentially identical with the people of the Allies, can fight so strenuously against others who are really themselves.

This difficulty, however, reaches a climax of absurdity when we realize that not only fellow-men but the vulture and the pig and the carp and the water-rat are as much identified with the divine essence as we ourselves. They too are not distinct beings but are united by an essential unity in one divine essence, and hence are essentially united to us. Though I have never felt any consuming desire to claim descent from a Darwinian monkey, I much prefer such remote ancestry to this pantheistic identity with a hog.

As an American, I feel an unconquerable impulse to fight wherever I see my liberty endangered; and I fail to see where the pantheist leaves me any more freedom than has my image in the glass. What freedom can you expect in a "manifestation"? Just the freedom which the manifestor grants it—which is simply none at all. My image in the glass does not have to be there, but it cannot get there unless I make it possible by placing myself before the mirror; and once there, it does as I make it do.

If we are merely parts of the great Divine essence, then, like any other mere part, we move and think and act just as that essence directs. My arm is not free to scribble these sentences unless I direct its action; for my arm is a part of me and as such subject to my direct dominion. And if men are parts of God, it is as absurd to speak

of individual human liberty as it is to speak of brains in a clothes-brush. This, the consistent pantheist admits without much reluctance. We are the toys of Divinity, flung, either by its free-will or in obedience to fixed laws, into a seemingly separate existence. Once more philosophy has thrown away free-will and with it all law and duty and obligation and morality.

For without individual freedom of will there is no place in the dictionary of pantheism for our meaning of a wrong act. Matricide, rape, the defrauding of widows and orphans, and that long catalogue of crimes which make desolate the land cannot in any sense be called moral wrongs. The murderer, the seducer, the firebrand, the traitor are merely parts of the Deity, and hence they act under direction and cannot do otherwise than they do.

And in what possible sense can we say that this universal Deity acts wrongly? It has no duty to anyone; for no one but itself exists. There is no one to place a binding law upon it or oblige it to carry out such a law were it to exist. If this be true, then the criminals in the world, who are after all only manifestations of the Deity, did not the slightest wrong when they betrayed innocence, snatched the very food from the mouths of the poor, and spitted screaming babies on the points of their swords. All of which implies that our moral codes will stand a thorough overhauling, and that some extremely primitive concepts of life will go by the board in a thrice.

Supposing, however, that the Deity is really the author of the world's crime—and I am using the word in its properly understood sense—then we have the disgusting picture of a Deity, a being of essence Divine, who freely bur-

dens itself with the atrocities of Cain and Messalina and Sir Henry Morgan and the Paris Apaches. We find ourselves confronted with a Being which by its infinite intelligence put into the world a wonderful order and plan, and yet which deliberately frustrates that order in a thousand and a million cases by senseless crimes. Though incomprehensibly vast in the breadth of its understanding, it either does not recognize, even as men recognize, the inherent destructiveness of sin, or else, recognizing its true nature, it none the less freely and deliberately embraces the things which, to the utmost of their power, set at naught the plan which that same Deity has fixed in the universe. In either case we have reduced our Deity to the level of the lowest degenerate that walks the streets of our cities. Thus pantheism, which started out to make all men gods, ends by reducing God to the condition of the most disgusting criminal.

There is no denying that at first sight, especially when draped in the opalescent robes of the East, pantheism seems a flattering balm to our souls. But if, logically followed out, it first makes us equal to God and then makes God equal to the clay beneath our feet and the criminal whose presence we feel a profanation; if it deprives us of our individuality; if it strips us of free-will and makes us the toy of some irresponsible deity; if it inevitably makes the philanthropist and the murderer alike unworthy of praise or blame, it is not a doctrine to flatter the vanity, but to pervert the human intelligence. Man must by the force of his nature bow before some deity. Yet who dare say that the savage who enshrines in his hut a flat-nosed idol of clay is more to be ridiculed for his cult than the scientist who admits to the sanctuary of his mind this pantheistic god of contradictions?

World Builders

A FAMOUS scientist once remarked in a bragging mood that, given matter and force, he could construct the universe. The boast sounds like an echo of old Archimedes' vaunting offer that, given a lever and a fulcrum, he could move the earth. Each had little fear that his boast would be taken up. Possibly both the scientist and his Grecian predecessor thought that they could make good their brag; certainly the Greek set himself the far simpler task. But in either case, the instruments needed for the contemplated operations were admittedly beyond the power of the boasters; each felt his incapacity to furnish himself with the needed material and tools. The difference between them lies in the fact that Archmimedes never expected anyone to furnish him with his gigantic toys, while the scientist could take his matter and force as actually existing and patent facts.

Matter and force and the Directive Intelligence separate from them were the three factors which together brought the visible universe to its present state of development. The question arising immediately is whether that Intelligence, like the boastful scientist, was "given" matter and force to work with, just as the architect is given his bricks and steel and concrete and the power of his donkey engine. Are matter and force beings which exist by the force of their own nature and quite independently of any outside agency, or do they owe not

merely their direction but their actual existence to the gigantic Intelligence which ordered them?

To answer this question we must apply to matter and force the two principles without which any scientific investigation would be as futile as questioning a parrot: Nothing begins to be without some cause capable of producing it; and, nothing exists without a sufficient reason to account for its existence. These are the principles which have enabled scientists, from a handful of flint arrows and a bit of broken pottery, to ascertain pretty exactly the intellectual development and culture of races that perished before the plans of the pyramids were drawn, and to plot out, from a knowledge of the Pennsylvania coalbeds, the vast, marshy forests that bloomed at a period when fish spawned on the peaks of the Rockies. A slight variation in the orbit of some planet is sufficient to show that some unknown and as yet unseen body is drawing it from its course. The presence of a characteristic unexplained by known elements led Madame Curie to the discovery of radium. Indeed the principles enunciated are the commonplaces of every scientific experiment. So if matter and force began at some time to exist, they must have had a cause sufficient to produce them; if they have been eternal, still they must have some reason sufficient to explain their existence.

Our everyday experience has made us acquainted with the constant appearance of beings in the world that have their origin in others which in many cases are doomed to disappear. We meet everywhere the constantly recurring phenomena of plant life developing and propagating itself through seeds; we see on every side the mystery of birth and death and the passing on of life

through generations that rise and fall like successive waves on a beach. Even the water of the seas and the rocks of the mountains were formed from the union of elements which in a prehistoric past bore but slight superficial resemblance to the forms they assumed in composition. We are, in fact, surrounded by links in a chain of causes and effects, which traces its beginnings to a period which no mathematician has as yet computed.

The mind is staggered at the idea that this chain of causes and effects has been in existence from eternity, that there really was no first cause. In fact, as was previously noted, such an hypothesis simply destroys the theory of evolution, for in an infinite duration matter and force should certainly have attained an infinite perfection, a thing which no sane man claims for them. Supposing then that they did exist eternally but only began to evolve themselves at a definite time in the past, we have a hypothesis which this time plays hob with the established law of inertia. For a body at rest by the force of its nature continues to stay in that state unless moved by some outside agency. A stone lying in the Grand Cañon will lie there until it is weathered into dust, unless some tourist pitches it into the rushing stream or some earthquake jars it from its resting place, or some other external force rudely moves it from its position. That is kindergarten science. So the idea of matter and force, which had been from eternity quiescent, suddenly springing into motion, indicates clearly that some other force must have been there to cause that first motion. In this case we have another indication of the influence of the Directive Intelligence on the matter and force of the universe.

The extreme unlikelihood and even impossibility of

an eternal series of causes and effects force us ultimately to a first cause which gave the rest existence or at least set in motion that long course of evolution. This first cause was itself either caused by some other cause, or it was the cause of itself, or it always existed and this by the force of its own nature. As it was the first cause, obviously it was not brought into existence by some other cause. The problem of a thing's not yet in existence being the cause of itself makes the trick of lifting one's self by the bootstraps seem the simplest athletic exercise. So if there was a first cause, which itself had no cause, it must have had an eternal existence due to its own inherent nature.

Such a being differs essentially from any other being in the range of experience. For every being we know from actual experience has the reason for its existence not in itself but in some other being. Conceive then a chain of causes and effects stretching back as far as you wish, even into eternity: corn producing grains and the grains fresh stalks; birds laying the eggs which are nurtured into small, gaping-mouthed fledglings. In each individual case the reason for the new being lay in the fact that a previous being had produced it, and since any one of a thousand or a million possible misfortunes, the dropping of the seed on a rock or the addling of the egg in the sun, could have prevented its coming into existence, each cause might easily have failed to act, and each effect was no more inevitable than are the pansies which the amateur gardener hopes to see sprouting from the seeds he trustfully planted. In fact, whole races of plants and animals, like the famous extinct race of trilobites, completely dropped out of existence, leaving behind no trace save bits of fossil embedded in the form-

ing rock. And man himself for all his superlative gifts of mind and will finds traces of whole nations of beings like himself which some unknown disaster swept completely from the records of the past.

Not one single link in the chain but owes its forging to some outside agency; not one link but depends on a hundred doubtful circumstances; not one link which by the very force of its nature had to come into existence. We have in consequence a chain made up of links each one of which does not have the reason for its existence in itself but which depends on some other being; and it must be remembered that no chain is stronger than its weakest link. So if no single link is self-existing, the whole chain has the reason for its existence not in itself but in something outside of itself. And unless that being is self-existing and contains within its own nature the reason for its existence we have to continue our search until at last we come to a being that does exist by the force of its nature, and that owes the reason for its existence to itself alone. Make then the chain eternal if you wish; still each single link and hence the whole chain by their very nature demand some being which does not owe its existence to someone else but which exists because it is its nature to exist. And once more we are driven back to a first cause which differs essentially from all other beings in this universe and on which all other beings necessarily depend.

So matter and force not only owe their direction to something outside of themselves, but they depend upon this outside agency for their very existence. Now comes the question of how that outside agency, that Directive Intelligence brought them into existence. Obviously, it did not find them ready to hand, for if it did, then they are actually independent beings and in no way relying

on the outside agency, the theory which our essay in armchair philosophy has been disproving. The Directive Intelligence then must have produced them since they owe it their existence. This could have happened in either of two ways: either matter and force are parts of this self-existent Being, or they were called into existence, which they did not before possess. Certainly matter and force are not parts of the Directive Intelligence, for that would drive us back once more to Pantheism with all its absurdities. So we are forced to admit that the Intelligence which directs the universe called matter and force into being, nothing but Itself previously existing. That is what we call the act of creation.

The unbelieving philosopher and essayist, whose sense of humor is often strikingly redundant, has had titillating fun laughing at the Christian God whom he loves to describe as a doddering old man seated on a glittering throne, surrounded by bored angels and saints, and occasionally breaking the monotony by wielding the lightning. Unfortunately that is humor without any point, for the essayist not only made the joke but the god as well. The Christian God is not a sort of super-minister in black coat and starched tie, with, possibly, a wobbly tiara. He is the infinite Intelligence which put order and plan into a world which without Him would be chaos. He is a being distinct from the world and hence enjoying a personal existence, an existence which He owes to none but Himself. We find Him exercising in the creative act a power which surpasses all powers we know anything about. It is not the man who adores such a God that is the fool. The fool is he who prefers no God, or a god of his own making, even if that god have clay feet, or wear the image of imperfect man.

The Dream of Immortality

THE mad anxiety of certain modern philosophers to run away from the idea of immortality is what Thomas Hardy would call one of life's little ironies. Toward the beginning of the war, Haeckel took occasion from the carnage of the battlefield to remark pityingly that after all immortality is a dream, a beautiful dream, but a dream none the less. Whereat, sundry reviews nodded solemnly assenting heads.

It takes a man with the calm assurance of Haeckel to stigmatize all mankind, save himself, a small coterie of materialists in our day, and an insignificant scattering of ancients, as deluded dreamers. The acquaintance of a high-school student with the literature of Greece and Rome, the most casual dipping into Egyptian archeology, any slight knowledge of Hindu or Chinese beliefs, the burial rites of the Mound Builders, or the traditional beliefs of the American Indians show that pagan nations were scarcely a pace behind the Hebrews and the peoples of Christian Europe in their belief in immortality. But of course they were all sound asleep. How fortunate for our generation that we possess a human alarm-clock to wake us from our dream, beautiful though it be! Is not unbelief astoundingly modest?

To begin with, I freely admit that if there are no souls, there is, of course, no immortality. We are only too grimly aware of the death of the body and its consequent decay. But former essays in armchair philosophy

have been love's labor lost if their readers have not been confirmed in their belief that they have souls distinct from their bodies and performing intellectual acts and free acts of the will which no mere body could perform. Naturally, though, as Haeckel does not own a soul of his own but believes himself to be blood-brother, or at least first cousin, of the bull and chamois and that most fashionable relative, the ape, it would be simple nonsense for him to expect immortality. A plump turkey at Thanksgiving-time would have a far better chance.

But you, faithful reader, in your armchair and I in mine know that we have a soul, a something more than our shifting, changing body. We know too that that soul can understand right and justice and abstract physical and moral laws, that it can form an idea of God and of other souls, all of which no sense of our bodies ever experienced, for the simple reason that they are not material objects. One wonders, by the way, how Haeckel can talk of immortality if he had no soul, for he never saw anything immortal, and he is a thousand miles from having heard or felt the abstract thing we call immortality. We know as well that we have a free will, while our bodies are bound by the laws of physics and chemistry. So we at least have within us something which performs actions essentially higher than any action performed by our bodies. Such a soul might conceivably be immortal.

Our own experience too has shown that the destruction of the body does not necessarily mean the soul's destruction. For you will recall that every seven years the body is completely destroyed and rebuilt, while the soul remains essentially unaltered, binding in a unity of

personality the man tottering to his grave and the child toddling to his mother's knee. At least during life our souls are not destroyed with the destruction of our bodies.

One infallible recipe for the making of a successful materialist is carefully to ignore or condescendingly to pity the higher beliefs and aspirations of man. If Haeckel instead of pitying his poor dreamers had given a glance at their dream, he might have felt some slight fear that his pity was misplaced. For, oddly enough, it is as impossible for a man to be absolutely original in his dreams as it is in his poetry. Dreams, much like poetry, are the fragmentary and often inconsequent reproductions of real convictions and passionate aspirations. The stuff of dreams are the things we know and the things we crave in our waking life.

Supposing then that immortality is a dream, it is a dream based on an aspiration as firmly embedded in human nature as is hunger for food or a craving for love. It is a dream which has for its basis in man's waking life a continuous, unconquerable craving for perfect happiness. May it not be that the Designer of the universe when He gave man that craving intended at some future time to gratify it?

If man is, as Haeckel would maintain, just a step higher than the beast, it is remarkable that his horizon is not bounded by a soft bed of straw and a bit of juicy meat. Instead we have a craving for a happiness greater than any that life can give us. The most terrible pain does not come from diseased limbs and an aching brain; it comes from the failure of our constant striving after happiness. Like Nevill Fanning in "Initiation," men build their dreams of happiness on love of woman or love

of nature, and dream after dream fades, while the insatiable, almost maddening, craving for happiness remains.

It has become part of a philosophical creed since the days of Schopenhauer to sneer at the place of happiness in the world's economy. Yet strike happiness from man's life and we would have a race of galley slaves, ambitionlessly inert save under the lash of hunger or lust; put the desire for happiness back, and you energize the world. As at the kiss of Prince Charming, the sleeping world awakes; poets write; explorers plunge through the frozen entanglements of the poles; merchants pile up fortunes; scholars add knowledge to knowledge; and soldiers seek glory at the cannon's mouth. Even the poor fool whose guiding star is a flickering red light is lured on by an insatiable craving for happiness. Every cocktail that is mixed, every hypodermic that is filled, every cabaret that makes hideous the night, is a sop thrown to man's hunger for happiness.

If in all this broad world any man at any time has found the secret of perfect happiness, he has hidden it more effectively than its inhabitants hid the fabulous city of the Cæsars. Surely experience, that safest and most expensive of teachers, should by this time have convinced men that their dream of perfect happiness is a dream indeed, if they seek it in this world. For history and the daily papers keep maddeningly dinning into our unwilling ears the fact that happiness cannot be measured in terms of stocks and bonds, nor in languages learned, nor pictures painted, nor titles conferred, nor even in souls saved. Like so much salt water, all the possessions one can heap up merely render more insupportable our thirst for happiness, for as long as men

shall live, at the moment of their greatest power they will weep, in tiresome imitation of Alexander, for further worlds to conquer.

Recall the fable of the fisherman and the enchanted fish; like all fables it is truth crystallized; men ask first for a cottage, then for a palace, then for a patent of nobility, and at last for the sun and moon for their playthings. Vast knowledge whets the appetite for more; the controller of a factory aims to control the whole industry; and the emperor with dominion over the earth would dream by night of an airship expedition against Mars. Even should we possess the earth for our throne and the heavens for our canopy, our ultimate and fearfully anticipated possession is a mound, deep and dark and shunned by even our best-beloved. That terrible realization is enough to turn to wormwood any pleasure that time can offer us.

Jove, said the old mythology, tortured Tantalus by creating in him a devouring thirst and yet keeping the water just out of reach of his parched lips. Jove had a small boy's love of pulling a live beetle to pieces. Yet if the Creator of the universe planted in the soul of man an unconquerable thirst for perfect happiness and made it impossible for man ever to quench that thirst, Jove would have been by comparison a merciful, beneficent deity. For Jove tortured one guilty mortal; God would be torturing the whole human race.

It is strange that persons who pride themselves on their own superlative virtues and think most kindly of their friends, will talk as if the world's Creator had neither common-sense nor common justice. We at least must grant the Person which put order into this universe the virtues we would not deny a chance acquaintance.

Yet there is no justice in God unless the soul with its intellect and will is immortal. In the heart of every man in every age and people has been that passionate craving for perfect happiness, and it has been consistently and inevitably denied fulfilment in this life. We have but two alternatives: either God has been using men for His sport, driving them on blindly, irresistibly after a phantom that fled as they approached it, or He has put perfect happiness in the power of man in a world beyond. In the first supposition, God would not be God but a brutal tyrant worse than those Oriental monarchs who chained their starving prisoners close to their own banqueting boards. Worst of all, He would have allowed all men to dream their beautiful dream of immortality while all the while He laughed them to scorn.

In the second alternative, perfect happiness inevitably means immortality. For no happiness can be perfect unless its possessor be sure that it will never end; the mature happiness of a devoted husband and wife fails just in this, that it will end. If God in common justice means to make possible the satisfaction of the thirst which He has created, He must have granted to human souls the gift of immortality.

God too has given us an intellect which no man has begun to plumb to its depth, and he has allowed us a few brief years on earth in which to fill its limitless bounds. Is that the sort of common-sense we should expect of the Designer of the universe? That would be like the act of man who, to store the grain crop of a single summer, built an elevator which covered the western continent, and when summer was over leveled the immense structure to the ground. At the end of the longest and most studious life, man has stowed away a few tiny grains of knowledge in his vast intellect, just enough to

make him crave for more. It is an insult to God's intelligence to suppose that He created these gigantic intellects to end with their work but just begun.

If we are not immortal, then the lot of the snake in the grass, or Burns's field mouse, is happier than ours; they at least have neither intellect which craves for knowledge nor will which thirsts after perfect happiness. But we cannot suppose that the God in whose universe such wonderful order reigns would raise man above the beast by his intellect and will only to use that intellect and will in making him more miserable than the lowest reptile. On the contrary, we are certain with a Divine certainty that while there is a God in the universe and while in man's heart throbs that insuperable craving for happiness, the dream of immortality shall not have been dreamed in vain.

XIII

Moral Immorality

THE world is so full of moralists at present that it is in imminent danger of becoming immoral. For it is seldom healthy for any man or any generation to talk too much about anything. Often enough that is a sign that a man is trying to talk himself into a belief that he actually possesses something that he would like very much to have, as a bank president boasts the unassailable solvency of his institution at a time when the thought of a bank inspector gives him cold chills. Decadent ages are usually rife with seers who propound wise maxims and grave epigrams which will serve the populace in place of otherwise forgotten virtues. In the same way that an age which is sterile in pure literature turns critical and talks about books, an age which recognizes that its own morals show best by gaslight talks learnedly and lustily on the beauty of virtue and the inner significance of morality, hoping by noise to distract a too inquisitive attention.

But our moralists—and we are inundated with novelists and playwrights and essayists and poets who play with morals as the Lake Poets played with flowers—have coined for our age a new set of moral epigrams whose burden is a consistent and insistent negation. There is no such thing as absolute morality. No act is by its nature either good or bad. Moral law is an antique that passed out with what-nots and hair-cloth furniture; like them, very serviceable in a mid-Victorian

parlor, but without either use or beauty in a world of arts-and-crafts furniture and geometric wall-paper. While each literary season brings its supply of literary moralists who chatter gaily of right and wrong and the futility of moral codes, they differ chiefly in the breadth and sweep of their denials. The best moralist seems to be the one who rejects the largest section of the moral law.

In the midst of this blithe chorus of denials, a person feels forced to clap his hands to his ears and pause for a moment's silent thought. Have our devoted ancestors after all been suffering from an age-long delusion when they refused some actions the light of their countenance and bade others welcome to their homes? Our lusty-lunged moralists, with their revolutionary creeds and their literary bad manners, are shouting that they were. Poor ancestors!

All acts, comes the protest, weigh the same in either scale of the moral balance. Custom, some cry, is all that makes an action good or bad. Morals are as much a thing of fashion as the cut of a coat or the length of a skirt. Murder has been banned by custom along with the unpleasant habit of gnawing bones held between one's fists. Yet as it is not such a far reach from gnawing bones to eating corn off the cob, murder may in time become a popular parlor sport. Nay, protest others, before civil laws were enacted, men were as innocent of morals as they were of monocles. With the introduction of laws, some actions became bad and others good. Wrong, all of you, shouts the moral anarchist who hides his red shirt under "immaculate linen"; the only moral man is the Nietzschean hero who recognizes no law, no custom, no morality, who rides on an iron-shod charger over the

shams and shadows we call the moral law. "The golden rule is that there is no golden rule."

Under the old moral code a moral act was one by the frequent repetition of which a man became good or bad, worthy of praise or blame. A person who frayed his pockets dipping in for money for the needy was considered to be performing an essentially moral act; one who dipped into the pockets, frayed or otherwise, of others was considered guilty of an essentially evil action. On one side of their moral ledgers men wrote a list of acts for which praise should be bestowed: patriotism, continence, honor, devotion to parents. On the other they inscribed a second list for which men incurred the scorn and blame of mankind: treason, lust, lying, filial ingratitude. And in their literatures they crystalized these moral acts in Leonidas and Ephialtes, Lucrece and Pasiphaë, Regulus and Sinon, Cordelia and Regan. Were they wrong in thus cataloguing acts as one catalogues diamonds against their paste imitations?

With all due contempt for our ancestors, they were not stupid enough to think that the acts of a baby or an idiot could be moral acts. They, of course, demanded for any moral action consciousness of the action and liberty of choice. They too, quite as much as our clever moderns, recognized that custom might influence a man's mental attitude toward right and wrong; the simple matter of what constitutes sufficient raiment is an instance of that. But if custom or law is all that makes the difference between good and bad, they would have vehemently insisted that there is really no essential difference at all.

Custom, for example, determines our table manners; and it is not unlikely that the table manners of St. Simon Stylites would have inexpressibly shocked Don Juan,

though no one debates about their respective morals. Law is the public expression of the will of the governing portion of the community. Yet no man feels like slinking off and hiding his head because he used his garden hose at a time of day prohibited by public enactment; nor does he expect, just because he has decorated his terrier's neck with a license tag, to have his own neck weighed down with a medal. If customs or laws favoring certain actions are all that make them morally good, and other customs or laws banning other acts alone make them morally evil, then between truth and lying there is precisely the same difference that exists between eating peas with a fork or with a knife. And while peas rolling from a knife may not delight the esthetic soul, they leave our moral sense intact.

But is this really the case? Is there no essential difference between actions which we call morally good and those we call morally bad? The answer is simply to see what would happen were customs to be reversed and the laws altered by inserting negatives wherever they are not found and deleting them wherever they occur. Promptly our attitude toward patriotism and treason, for example, would suffer a complete change, and we would be forced to shoot patriots at dawn and commemorate traitors in immemorial bronze. If laws alone make morality, then laws might, at some time in the little known but often felt past, have enforced universal fratricide, established schools for the instruction of youth in vice, forbade children to care for their aged parents, and banned as quite immoral purity and temperance and the cardinal virtues. A whim of some mighty lawgiver, a fad successfully established by some ancient culture club might have made murder praiseworthy and placed piracy among

the honored professions along with medicine and law. For all actions, say our new moralists, are morally colorless until law or custom makes them either black or white or crimson. The commonest of common-sense revolts at the possibilities which this theory, logically followed out, suggests.

On the contrary, even where custom has acted directly against what we call morality, men have recognized the real difference between good and evil. In the degenerate days of the Roman Empire, when the customs of the imperial city sanctioned an almost universal unchastity among its women and set a premium upon craven sycophancy among its men, poets, with the same pens which had written glowingly of their mistresses' shame, paid reverent tribute to a Cornelia or a vestal virgin; and philosophers paused long enough in their flattery of the Caesars to praise the unbending knee of Cato the Younger.

And one important point cannot escape even a new moralist. Laws are not the makers but the recorders of men's attitude toward the facts of life. Sanitary laws are enacted only after the public mind has been educated to a belief that dirt and unhygienic conditions are necessarily bad. So you may be sure that murder and arson are not bad because the laws forbid them; the laws forbid them because men saw that they were morally bad.

It is unquestionable, of course, that there are actions which we might call moral cosmopolites, dwelling on the hazy borderland of morality and defying all attempt at strict classification. But there are a sufficient number of obviously good or bad actions to indicate quite clearly what it is in the act itself which marks it for

what it is. An action is morally good if it conforms to the nature of a man as a free, rational being. Any action, on the contrary, which perverts his nature, humbling his will and intellect under the hoofs of his wild passions is, essentially and prior to any law that may forbid it, morally evil. Charity is essentially good because it is an action which befits a being whose will has been made capable of loving his fellow-men. Lust is a crime because it allows the passions which we possess in common with the beasts to gain a dominion over the very faculties of will and intellect which make us men; though on the same principle, these passions when controlled and ordered by right reason become instruments of untold good.

A man is worthiest of praise when he has attained through a long course of moral actions to the full heights of his manhood; and all that helps him to true manliness is morally good; all that holds him back, morally evil. The woman to whom we lift our hats in a spirit of reverence is the woman who radiates from her whole person the purity and fragrance of soul without which woman is nothing more than Kipling's three disgusting elements; and all that has tended to make her womanliness precious in the sight of God and men we call morally good; all that has dragged her down is morally evil.

The race of new-moralists, who really should be called no-moralists, will continue, I suppose, their career of feverish negation. Yet though all the laws and customs of men were suddenly to be dropped into oblivion, were chairs for the new-moralists to be set up in every university, and their plays produced on every stage, men would still recognize that between good and evil actions

lies a chasm which all the magic of poetic expression and all the witchery of beautiful prose can never close. And as the good man pauses for a brief, horrified glance at that hill up which the new-moralists are mockingly leading the way, he feels in his heart the rising of a prayer like that prayer which rose from the lips of Him who taught us the meaning of morality by living and dying for it: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Our Friend the Utilitarian

NOT for the world would I suggest that modern philosophy might plagiarize. Less still would I hint that it had taken to its heart a principle which Jesuits have grown weary repudiating. But sometimes it looks suspiciously as if the dear old despised principle that the end justifies the means had got a new dress and a new name and become utilitarianism. When the old-line moralists raise a voice of protest against birth-control, its defenders do not proclaim that birth-control is a moral action; but with frenzied accents and a tremolo stop, they point to the mothers whose lives it will save, to the over-population it will prevent, to the increase of quality in the race as against mere quantity. And you get the same answer when you question the morality of euthanasia and divorce and half the modern evils; it's useful, and therefore moral.

Normally we talk as if the willing surrender of one's chastity is a distinct moral wrong; yet when Monna Vanna goes to the general of the besieging army to deliver up, if need be, her chastity to save her people, one would think from the pitying sobs and the patter of approval that she were a Christian martyr walking into the jaws of a lion. The end she had in view was the saving of her people; so it really did not make much difference about the means she employed to attain her end. And Monna Vanna is only an example in heroic size of the thousand heroines and heroes who do wrong that right may come of it. From this to utilitarianism is not even

a short step, for, says the utilitarian, any action is moral which is useful for the happiness of the individual or the race.

Most certainly, he continues, there is a difference between actions morally good and actions morally bad. Any one whose brain has not been permeated with the fog of moral skepticism or addled by the heat of passions long indulged can see that. But the only difference between them is their ultimate effect on the temporal happiness of the individual or the race. If he stresses the effect of happiness on the individual, he calls himself a hedonist. If the happiness he has in mind is the greatest temporal happiness of the greatest number, he calls himself a social utilitarian.

Hedonism, as you can readily imagine, is a delightful moral system for any pagan age. Epicurus was the first to form it into a clear philosophical system, and every young blade in Athens or Rome who sought to dignify his passion for wine and pretty slaves with the name of philosophy called himself an Epicurean. Today, hedonism is chiefly a working hypothesis; and one does not brag too loudly if he works by it.

But social utilitarianism, with its large-minded affectation of sympathy for the majority, is distinctly in favor. Your social utilitarian points to the factories whose smoke is the ubiquitous symbol of a nation's prosperity, to the universities and art museums and dramatic renaissances which stand for a nation's culture, to the polling-booths and the free hospitals and the labor pensions and public playgrounds which mark the century's social development. Any act, he contests, which promotes these things, resulting thus in the greatest good for the greatest number, is morally good. Any action which impedes this good of society is morally bad.

It is not surprising that in this day of King Motor one should forget the use of harness and hitch the cart in front of the horse. And this is precisely what the utilitarian does. An act, says the utilitarian, is good because it is useful. The whole difficulty with that sentence is that the clauses have been inverted. It should read: An act is useful because it is good. There is a vast difference between saying: "I like this machine because it can make sixty miles an hour," and "This machine can make sixty miles an hour because I like it."

Now I quite willingly concede that every good action is ultimately—and I stress the adverb—bound to serve the interests both of the individual and the community. But there are certain good actions, like dying for the truth or sacrificing a nation in the interests of justice, which certainly bring little temporal happiness compared to the temporal ruin they involve. They would seem to be good in spite of their inutility to the individual. And so when I say that good actions are always ultimately useful, I have my eyes fixed not merely on the utility in this life, but the higher utility of an immortal soul in another life. Still, even in this case, an act must be good before it can be ultimately useful.

Once more, we must resort to a comparison. A vacuum-cleaner, if one may trust the hyperbolic pages of the advertising section, is eminently useful; but before it can be useful, it has to be a good vacuum-cleaner, or, to be specific, the one mentioned in the particular advertisement you happen to be reading. No one nowadays, at least in theory, questions the utility of dentists; but long before a dentist is trusted to preside at the obsequies of a pet nerve, men make very sure that he is a good dentist, technically skilful and acquainted with the science of his profession.

In very much the same way the utility of an action will depend on its inherent goodness. Just as a naval expert by examining a turbine can tell what benefit it will bring our navy, so a moralist by examining the nature of an act can tell its bearing on human happiness. But the reason which makes a turbine a good turbine and an act a moral act must be sought elsewhere than in their utility.

In justice to Epicurus, it must be admitted that he never intended his followers to burn incense and nerves and manhood to Bacchus and Aphrodite, or to top off philosophical debates with philandering debauches. Yet if the followers of his rule of morality did in fact make their names synonymous with glutton and libertine, the fault was largely his own. For to say that the morality of an act depends on its effect on personal happiness is to leave room for as many interpretations of morality as there are interpretations of the term "happiness." And history is witness to the innumerable meanings that have tucked themselves into those three short syllables.

Happiness for a scientist and for an American Indian, happiness for a nun and for a dweller in hotels and cabarets, happiness for a bibliophile and for a baseball fan have scarcely a common denominator. If all forms of personal happiness are in themselves morally right, then Raffles and that long line of gentlemen pirates ancient and modern whose supreme thrill lay in a bit of artistic buccaneering were moral men. And what of the duellist who, like D'Artagnan, loved the flash of rapiers better than the flash of diamonds? Were the duels he fought with an enthusiastic zest moral actions? If not, then who is to determine what constitutes man's true happiness and what is but its shadow? And how is he to know just wherein lies the difference?

The fact is that men have clearly distinguished between

morality and mere utility. Socrates once said that a courtesan contributed perhaps more than anyone to the happiness of the world. Yet he never intimated that such happiness was moral. The wealthy tenement-owner who distils his wealth from the blood of the poor is serving the purposes of his own personal gratification. Dare he flatter himself in the depths of his heart that he is a moral man? And what of those actions which, like the self-sacrifice of Sidney Carton, led inevitably to death? Judged by the Epicurean standard, they are essentially immoral acts, for they result in the destruction of all possibility of further temporal happiness.

The social utilitarian has little better success when he tries to determine just what is useful and what conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. For nations have differed as widely as have individuals on the meaning of that exasperating little word "happiness," and they have frequently enough felt that their highest utility lay in actions which they never dared to dignify as morally good.

Many a Roman statesman was convinced that the bloody gladiatorial fights, by keeping alive the martial spirit and instilling a contempt for death, served the best interests of the State. This by no means proves that they were equally convinced that the butchering of men was an essentially moral act. Our Pilgrim Fathers thought that the wholesale extermination of the Indians would be highly useful and conducive to the peace and happiness of the struggling towns. Possibly it was, though one would hesitate to pronounce the murder of Indian tribes through the deliberate introduction of smallpox a morally good action. The economists of Elizabeth's day felt that the introduction of the slave trade was a good thing for

the mother country and the colonists, just as in former days Greek economists built up their systems on the foundation of a universal slavery. I doubt very much if either of them debated the morality of carrying off a free people into servile captivity. Utility and morality in this as in a thousand other cases, as for example in every war of conquest, were never for a moment confounded.

In fact, statesmen, with eyes open to the immorality of their conduct, have plunged into courses of action which they felt to be for the utility and happiness of their fellow-citizens. By a diplomatic lie or a bit of trickery a statesman averts a war. He is convinced that he is serving the best temporal interests of his fellow-men though he may be sure that the lie is wrong. And the statesman who, for the sake of right and justice, like the statesmen of heroic Belgium, chooses the destruction of his people rather than a stain on their honor proves that mere utility and temporal happiness are by no means the ultimate tests of what is good and honorable. The nation which goes down to ruin fighting for justice has in annihilation found something far higher than mere temporal prosperity.

Happiness and utility are such flexible, shifting terms that they are altogether unsafe guides for determining a morality which is independent of all changing conditions. Murder is not good today and wrong tomorrow, even though a man sees that his best interests lie in the slaying of a foe. An action is not morally good unless the happiness which it produces and the utility it conserves be in themselves morally good. And for this we need a standard as unchangeable as the nature of right and wrong.

A Cure for Caprice

ROUGHLY considered, there are two general classes of moralists: the moralists who invent theories, and the moralists who live them. The second follow the first as inevitably as a tail follows a comet, or a small boy, a circus parade. There precisely is the danger of all moral theorizing. If every man were a hermit, living ten miles from his nearest neighbor and absolutely barred from communication with anything more human than a woodchuck, he might sit quietly, in the midst of the forest, spinning moral theories from dewy morn to dusky eventide.

But moralists love solitude in the same way they hate print. As soon as a moralist has gathered a dainty little handful of fantastic moral principles, he rushes furiously into a university or a publisher's office, blows a bugle, clangs a gong, and assembles the populace; whereupon, some pliant idiot takes the new teachings hot from the master's lips and plunges outdoors to try them on the neighbors. Why have the neighbors never thought of organizing a moral Home Guard?

Geographers may not mention the fact, but among the most important products of our country and among our staple importations are lawless heroes and wayward heroines. They ramp through our current novels and over our subsidized stage "living their own lives." (We can be grateful, by the way, that they're not living ours.) Through the medium of special newspaper writers with alliterative names they tell the credulous public that their particular murder or adultery or robbery was the expres-

sion of their eager, panting souls. They did no wrong; how could they, when they were following their esthetic conscience? What we call crime, they call necessary self-expression. Men, stand to the life-buoy!

Irritating and ridiculous as these criminals in evening clothes may be, they are after all only the camp followers of a very definite school of morality. They all stand valiantly for the principle that whatever the individual decrees to do is right; evil is whatever the individual conscience feels itself unable to perform. Morality for them is so much a matter of private interpretation that any crime from manslaughter to the wholesale production of literature reeking of vice is justified by the smug criminals and hysterical feminists who hold office in the "Soulful Society of Sob Sisters." We must not be too hard on them for carrying to its ridiculous conclusion the theory of subjective morality.

Since the days of Kant, its ablest exponent, the subjective school of morality has flourished mightily. Kant held that a morally good action is one which my reason decrees and which I feel could be made the universal rule of action for all men. Shall I die for my country? asks the soldier as his officer calls for volunteers in an enterprise that means certain destruction. Yes, he answers; because my reason bids me die for my land, and because the best rule for all men under these circumstances would be to die thus for their country.

Shall I leave my husband? asks the modern heroine, in and out of the covers of our best-sellers, when her butterfly affection has flitted to the handsome coast guard. Yes, she cries, placing her hand where her heart, if she had one, would be located; because my reason bids me leave where love no longer dwells, and I should wish all women to do as I do under the same circumstances. An

ethical society of self-respecting Eskimo squaws would sniff at such morality, while a professor without a sense of humor would begin to explain the distinction between reason and caprice. But why should the moralist who accepts as his moral standard the individual conscience condemn her? Each one in his theory is moral dictator for himself, not only judging what is right and wrong but actually making it so. As dictators are notoriously irresponsible, we need not be surprised at the sickening procession of men and women in fiction and real life for whom the whim of the minute has become the law of life. Nor need we flatter ourselves that the end is yet.

Why will people persist in talking as if our reason were really the only unreasonable thing in the world? Unlike the German philosopher in the famous yarn, we do not pull down the blinds and fling all our natural histories in the fire when we want to know what a camel may be like. We trot out to the zoo and look a camel straight in the eye. If we don't, ten to one our camel will be a hippogrif or a dodo. In the same identical way the reason does not go into a darkroom to spin unreal theories out of nebulous data. It is not reason but nonsense unless it bases its operations on the facts of life.

So once more our moralistic friends are looking through the large end of the opera glasses. An action like murder or kidnaping, is not wrong because my reason forbids it; my reason, if it makes any pretense of being reasonable, forbids it because it is wrong. My reason, as soon as it knows anything about the nature of arsenic, mildly suggests the inadvisability of consuming it with my meals. Arsenic, however, is not slightly deleterious because my reason forbids it; my reason forbids it because, as a substitute for demi-tasse, arsenic is

not conducive to long life or proper digestion. Some kind grammarian ought to write a guide to the uses of "because."

Take a swift glance at any of the thousand actions which from the dawn of history, man's reason has classified as good or bad. In every case you will find that there is something in the very act itself which forces man's reason to approve or disapprove it. Every reasonable man recognizes the moral goodness of patriotism because through it our national life, so necessary to true peace and temporal prosperity, alone can be conserved. In a parallel way men recognize the evil of treason because, like the ambushed assassin, it aims with cowardly malice at the peace and happiness not of a single individual but of a whole people. There is something inherent in every good action which forces the human reason to approve it, and something in every evil action which forces the reason to condemn it. And that something we claim is its conformity or lack of conformity to man's rational nature taken in all its aspects.

Perhaps this may look a bit vague and cryptic; if so, blame a new combination of words; the fact itself is familiar to every moral man and woman. You, kindly reader in your armchair, act upon it a thousand times a day. Suppose, for example, that an honorable man feels within himself the sudden wild impulse to grip the throat of the scoundrel who ruined him in business; instantly his better nature (see how we seem to slip into the phrase?) rises in protest, and he casts the impulse aside as unworthy of him. Why? Because he sees clearly that murder reduced man to the level of a beast of prey, making him worthy fellow of the wolf and the panther; murder is against his whole rational nature. Why does

a pure woman shrink so swiftly from the slightest stain upon her honor? Because she realizes that her woman's nature has entitled her to a niche just below the angels, and every impulse that tends to cloud her stainlessness causes her to be less the being whose purity makes men honorable, and more the mere animal whose passion makes men beasts. Eating and drinking in themselves are actions which we share in common with the brute, though absolutely necessary for life. But we are instantly aware that when a man eats, as the Romans did, for the sheer joy of eating, or when a man allows a craving for drink to ruin his poetic genius, he works against his human nature and commits a morally wrong act.

For all their arguments to the contrary, the hedonist and the social utilitarian could not stay moral men for a single day unless they were constantly recurring to their human natures as the moral metric stick by which to measure their conduct. An action, say they, is morally good which promotes happiness. Yes, but surely all happiness is not moral. We have only to glance at the dens of our cities to realize that fact. Only that happiness is moral which conforms to man's rational nature, which raises it up and ennobles it. The libertine and the drunkard have no right to call their bestial pleasures man's true happiness, because they drag man's intellect and will through the gutters and make their victims false to the duties which constitute man's highest dignity.

In this day of men whose favorite study is their image in a glass and of women whose horizon is bounded by the hem of their skirts, one must keep dinning with monotonous repetition on that tiny additional phrase, "taken in all its aspects." Is it not maddening to hear

our cant writers harping on "self realization," as if men and women were isolated beings with the breeze and the sea-foam for their parents and the upper regions of the air for the habitat? There is no genuine self realization which does not take into consideration human nature in all its aspects, and very importantly in its essential relations to others.

We are bound, whether we like it or not, with woven steel to our parents, to our children, to civil society, to God. The mother who, in her enthusiastic hunt after culture, has to inquire her baby's name each time she goes to see it, may be wise as Aspasia; in one very important relation she is not a moral woman. A lie may here and now be to the eminent advantage of a lawyer; yet because of his essential duties as a member of the State, he may not perform an act that weakens the mutual trust and confidence without which society would be worse than a confederacy of picaroons. And while other moral systems, which regard man's epitaph as the end of all, may see no good in a man who contributes nothing to society's temporal prosperity, we find place in our moral world for the martyr, the missionary, the Poor Clare, and the man who lives to see noble hopes and dreams crushed into pitiful fragments.

It is the proud boast of Catholic philosophy that, here as elsewhere, she is the valiant champion of human nature. She stands for all that is best and noblest in man's nature; she points out a moral guide that cannot but lead him aright. The man and woman who keep their grip fixed on their human nature will not find themselves twisted from their path by every whim that blows hot with the breath of passion. Our moral standard is the sure cure for caprice.

The Reign of Law

MAN is at once the master and the anomaly of the world. Beneath him, the Creator has subjected all things, so that either by their very nature they minister to his needs, or he, by the force of his God-given intellect and will, can bend them to his service. On the soft pelt of the man-eating tiger, stretched now before his domestic hearth, his children tumble and play. The wind that can uproot whole forests becomes for him hewer of wood and drawer of water. Fire and flood, the swaying grain, the mettlesome horse, gold and the forces of steam and lightning serve him as no slave ever served a king in Babylon. The order of the universe all verges upward toward man, and on the pinnacle of the universe he stands, the world's greatest anomaly.

For in the midst of unchanging order he alone is free. All else must yield a blind obedience: he can lift his head against the world's Designer and cry a proud defiance. And he who is the appointed master of the world's order is also he who most often sets that very order at naught, putting chaos where without him order reigned. That is the mystery of man's free will.

Yet it is perfectly absurd to talk and act, as many modern philosophers talk and even act, as if, in the midst of this universal order, man, the most perfect of visible beings, were himself without any order whatsoever. It is ridiculous to suppose that the intellect which set a course to the stars and implanted an unchanging law in a

scarcely visible seed left man as the one lawless creature in a law-bound world. God is not a wise director but a fool of fools if He has left man free to scatter his talents, to squander his powers of intellect and will, to ride heedlessly over his fellow-men, spreading along his path ruin of souls and death of bodies. God could not make it right for man, His supremest visible creature, to thwart the order of the world. He has given him an intellect and will, but He could not give him leave to become inferior to the brutes by means of the very faculties which raise him above them. For a beast is bestial by force of his nature; a man becomes bestial in spite of his.

On the contrary, our own experience and the history of mankind prove that there is a law implanted in our natures which binds us to a definite course of action and forces us to avoid the contrary course. It is perfectly true that we have also a free will, and consequently the law does not coerce us as it coerces the horse and the ox and the rose and the comet by a blind, physical force which cannot be resisted. It is a law which is in accord with our free wills, which, leaving us physically free to act for or against the law, obliges us to choose with the law and not against it, if we would act as befits our human nature. There precisely is the anomaly: the law of our nature has been made to depend on our free will. We can live according to the law and thus attain the fullness of our manhood; or we can set the law at defiance and deliberately ruin all that is best within us. This is at once the glory and the peril of our freedom.

Natural law has an unpleasant ring in certain philosophical quarters. Law implies restraint, obligation, both of which words are sadly in disfavor. The revolutions which swept away first much of canon law and then more

of civil law have been aiming at natural law as well. But though we can destroy the laws of the land by pitching them, as they did in Russia, into a bonfire, the only way we can destroy the natural law is by rooting out the human intellect. The natural law is expressed so clearly and forcefully in every rational being that, even though he may run, he must read. From the dawn of reason we are conscious of its mandates, and we can read in the eyes of others—the frank, pure eyes of the nun not less than the brutal, shifting eyes of the roué—that they too have felt its binding power.

Among the first judgments of which we are conscious is: This action is right; this action is wrong. Blurred and hazy at first, we find such judgments growing clearer and more definite with advancing years and extending their scope to include a range of actions which hitherto had not touched our lives. Independently of any outside suggestion, frequently in the face of systematic training, men recognize with more or less clarity the difference between actions which are good and those which are bad. We need no instructors to tell us that murder and lying and the fleshly sins are wrong, and all the professors in the college of crime with Bill Sykes for their chancellor could never convince our reason that they are right.

Almost simultaneously with these judgments comes a second group which imperiously and without appeal bids us do the good and avoid the evil. No one rests satisfied with the purely impersonal, objective opinion that striking one's mother is a grave wrong. Immediately he feels within himself a peremptory mandate: You shall not raise your hand against your mother. Who does not recall with shrinking the first time he shut his ears resolutely to some exasperating command and ran heedlessly

into a course of action against which every fiber of his better nature was struggling in vain rebellion?

And then came the rush of condemnation which follows on every wrong, the bitter, relentless, accusing judgment: You should not have acted thus! We have all felt in a greater or less degree the remorse that made Macbeth see murdered men where others saw but empty thrones, and caused his wife to wander in her sleep, washing away a stain which water left as fresh as ever.

Here is law expressed more clearly than if it were written like the Roman Law on brazen tablets or like the law of the Hebrews on tables of stone. We have only to glance at the literature of the nations or to read their written codes of law, to discover that no matter how much men and nations may differ in their culture or in the religion which they follow, in the more general precepts of the natural law there is not only identity of thought but almost identity of expression.

These commands of which we are all conscious are not in any sense mere directions suggesting the most profitable course of action. They are real laws whose binding force we feel even when we struggle hardest against them. A business man finds himself so placed that by a single dishonest act, which no one can possibly discover, he will make a fortune for himself and for those he loves best; whereas honesty will in this case mean inevitable ruin. Still, he has no choice; the law is absolute; though disaster fling him and his family into irretrievable poverty, though he see his family starving before his eyes, he must take the course which his reason knows to be honest. And should he choose the dishonest act, not the clinking of gold across his counters, nor the healthy laughter of his carefully tutored children, nor the adulation of an

adoring wife can drown the voice within him which condemns his dishonest course.

Put in one pan of the balance fortune, honor, life itself, and in the other a mandate of the natural law, and the mandate must prevail. For her child the mother sacrifices health, her own pleasures, and the thousand luxuries which a woman's heart craves, because the natural law makes her duty to her child a paramount obligation. A soldier captured in battle receives from the enemy a choice: treason to his country followed by honors and wealth with a grateful foe, or a line of glistening rifles at dawn. He has no choice, if he follow the command of natural law, but the blinding handkerchief, the sharp order, and a grave in quicklime.

All men acknowledge this; our literature teems with the praise of men who, rather than violate the natural law, chose a death with torture. Even the pagan could not but admire the martyr who, when an almost casual gesture, the flinging of a bit of incense into a brazier, would have meant life, chose rather to become a living torch in the gardens of the Cæsar. And we stand in awe over the mangled body of the maiden who, to preserve her chastity, plunged down a cliff to certain death.

Here is a law which no mere man, least of all one's own self, could have implanted in the human soul. By what right can any man oblige me to lay down my life rather than transgress his precept? And it is ridiculous to suppose that such a law is self-imposed, for after all, my first instinct is the instinct of self-preservation, an instinct which the law in a thousand cases obliges me to conquer. What relative proportion is there between a short lie and my life? Yet something within me commands me to die rather than utter that lie. Indeed, the

simplest human law is inconceivable unless there were first a law in my nature obliging me to obey rightfully constituted authority.

This is a law which is beyond all possibility of human repeal. Man can tomorrow blot out the laws he made today; but when any written law contradicts the natural law, our whole instinct rises in rebellion, and we refuse to obey. One may ignore it or rebel against it; but one cannot repeal the natural law nor blot it from his heart.

Such a law, so weighty in its commands, so binding that I am obliged to sacrifice in its observance all that I naturally cling to, would be utterly impossible were there not some Being beyond and above me who has a right to force me to obey His will. The same Deity which set the wonderful order in the oak and the swallow and the whirling planet set too an order in my soul. But there is this difference: neither oak nor swallow nor planet can do other than obey, blindly and by a physical coercion, the law of its nature; the Deity has left me free to obey or resist the law as I choose. But whether I obey or resist, one fact I cannot escape: the natural law is for me the imperial voice of God.

The Philosophical Blues

THE interest of unbelievers in St. Francis of Assisi is to my mind one of the most encouraging signs of the present day. For if any man stood for a life different in every least detail from modern paganism that man was the dear St. Francis. He loved the simple, the unaffected, the natural. The sun and the rain, the north wind, and birds, flowers and little children he drew close to his heart in a passion of simple love. In all things he saw God, their maker, so that his heart sang all the day long. To him our artificial, intricate, hectic life with its preference of electric lights to the sun, of violet water to fresh rain, of ventilation systems to the north wind, of jazz bands to larks would have seemed unreal, hideous. And the frank conspiracy to keep little children out of God's world would have stricken the song from his lips.

In spite of his utter dissimilarity to neo-paganism, men cannot but admire the troubadour who, with an unconquerable optimism, saw beauty everywhere, who loved creatures with a Christ-like love, and whose soul throbbed with a long, sweet canticle to his God. They admire St. Francis even though he is the embodiment of Christian optimism.

But it is not a matter of ancient history since the optimism of St. Francis was preceded in popular favor by the pessimism of a very different stamp of man. Schopenhauer was read and discussed and admired; and Schopenhauer taught that "the only positive feeling is

that of pain," "that the world is a hell which surpasses that of Dante," "that life is a path of red-hot coals with a few cool places here and there." Delightful philosophy for armchair consumption, is it not?

Yet of the two classes of modern pagans, those, namely, who affect to admire St. Francis and those who follow Schopenhauer, the latter are by all odds the more logical. A pagan has not the least right to be an optimist and anyone with the slightest acquaintance with the ancient classics knows the drab melancholy which formed the background of pagan life. A follower of almost any of the modern un-Christian schools of philosophy is by his own choice logically doomed to pessimism. The philosopher who adopts the optimism of St. Francis without accepting his beliefs in God and Our Lady and the brotherhood of all men in Christ is simply a parrot who has mimicked human laughter without understanding why he laughs.

There is no conviction more chilling, more destructive of joy than the one by which a man is persuaded that he is being consistently deceived. Deception on the part of those we trust, even though we only suspect it, is enough to ruin our lives. It throws about us a mordant distrust which affects our attitude toward everything. It breeds suspicion, takes the firmness from the handclasp, deadens the love-light in the eye. A generous man can forgive an honest blow struck him in the face far sooner than he can a deception practised upon him by those he trusts. If all the misanthropes of the world were mustered in one grisly army, it would be found that those who had not been soured by the deceit of some trusted friend would scarcely number a corporal's guard.

And certainly there is no friend on whom we are

forced to rely half so much as we are upon our own senses. We are obliged to depend upon them for at least the beginnings of all our knowledge. What, then, should be the logical effect of a philosophy which teaches that our senses are constantly deceiving us, that we really have no bodies, and that whatever information we acquire through sight and hearing and touch is false and chimerical? For here we are confronted by a deception as constant as our waking lives, a deception which no effort on our part can ever hope to overcome.

If such a philosophy does not breed the blackest pessimism, a distrust of everything, it is because the philosopher who holds it lives a life quite independent of his beliefs. Though from a professor's chair he may preach that all matter is illusion and that only soul exists, he does not neglect to bandage a cut finger or to take his daily exercise in the university gymnasium. He may write learnedly about the untruthfulness of the senses, but for all that, he dodges when he sees a steel girder falling from a skyscraper. Living as he claims to do in the midst of constant deception, supplied with faculties that continually play him false, he should logically believe in nothing, trust no one, plunge himself into the utter depths of pessimism and despair. But because he lives quite independently of his philosophical creed, he can smile trustingly into the eyes of his friends and speak glowingly of St. Francis of Assisi.

If our democratic world has one overpowering hatred, it is the hatred of slavery. We cannot bear the thought of it even where the yoke presses on another; and the rattle of chains, binding soul or body, will drown the most entrancing music. Unless, then, a man's philosophy teaches that his will is free, it is impossible to see how he

can logically escape the misery which is the birthright of every slave. Bound hand and foot, driven forward under the lash of a blind chance or an irresponsible fate, he can no more lift his voice in song than could the galley slave chained to his oar. Difficulties impend over his terrified head, and he knows he is powerless to ward them off; temptations sweep down upon him, threatening his dearest happiness and the happiness of his loved ones, yet he has been convinced by his philosophy that no effort of his can stem the overwhelming tide.

For the philosopher of the slave-will there can be happiness only in so far as he uses his God-given freedom to ignore his own creed; for happiness is the companion of freedom alone. There at least, the dour old Puritan disciples of Calvin in England and in colonial America were brutally consistent. Their philosophy of life taught them that men are not free; so, with relentless logic, they trampled out the lights of the theaters, plucked the Maypole from the green turf, and banned from their vicinity the music of organ and of voice and human laughter.

Readers of current philosophy will have noted the recurrence of phrases like "Passing on the torch of life to future generations," "The immortality of the life-spark." When these expressions mean anything more than a vague sentimentality, they are a poor sop thrown to a world hungry for immortality. Instead of a genuine immortality, these philosophers dole out a diluted substitute in the assurance that we live again in our children and that immortality is found in the memory of our friends. There is no doubting the longing of man for an immortality not only for himself but even more, at times, for the loved ones he sees passing into the silence beyond. No man, even at the end of the longes' life, feels that he

has lived long enough, that he has exhausted the possibilities of knowledge, or sounded the depths of love. No man can bear the thought that his wife or his mother has ceased to be, that death is a barrier which means irrevocable separation. Without immortality or the hope of it, the longest life must end in pessimism, in the conviction that all is lost and lost forever.

But for the philosopher who denies a personal soul, immortality in any true sense is beyond the possibility of hope. If he believes that we have nothing but our bodies, he bounds human life with a meager span of hurried years. If, as a substitute for immortality, he talks of absorption in the great all-spirit, he offers a solution positively repulsive to men who cling passionately to their own individuality and who devotedly love precisely the individuality of other persons. And in this absorption into a Pantheistic god, all individuality is lost.

Only a philosophy which, like ours, gives man the positive assurance that he has an immortal soul can take the horror from death. For most other philosophies, death is a breaking with all we cling to most ardently; for the rest it is at least the sacrifice of the individuality which is dearer to us than any other possession. That way lies pessimism, drear and unrelieved.

No man can be happy in mere denials; no mind can be satisfied with negations. For that reason modern philosophy is so largely a dreary waste, repulsive to the man whose life is in touch with the beautiful and the real. It has denied or questioned the certainty of our commonest knowledge, doubted the very faculties on which all our activities depend, shackled our free-will with bonds of steel, torn God from His Heaven to substitute there a blind chance or a machine-like evolution,

stripped man of almost all his glorious prerogatives, and offered the grave or oblivion as our ultimate bourne. No wonder that such a series of pitiful denials should have been climaxed with Schopenhauer and his systematic pessimism.

On the contrary, it was the philosophy which rests firmly on positive affirmations, which upholds man's faculties in their quest of an attainable truth, which points out the glory and the responsibility of his free-will, which lifts the finger of hope to a directing Deity who is the source of our life and the guardian of our destinies, which marks man as the chosen son of the Most High with a life unlimited by range of years or ages, that woke the song on the lips of St. Francis and has made Christian philosophy the only source of consistent, systematic optimism.

XVIII

The Final Goal

PHILOSOPHY, which above all else should help a man to live, must be characterized by three things : its consistency, its common sense and its joyousness. In just these three elements Catholic philosophy is supreme. Every conclusion follows from proved premises with a consistency which its very adversaries must admire even while they withhold consent. Its teachings are so eminently in accord with the common sense that it reads like a commentary on and a guide to our universal human nature. Its proud boast of human freedom, its confidence in man's power to meet and cope with the material forces of the universe from the higher plane of his spiritual-material nature, its constant forward-looking toward a life where the unsatisfied cravings of this life are to meet a full satisfaction, its conviction that above all is a Directive Intelligence of undreamed-of power and beauty, impel the student to almost a lightness of heart.

I have not hoped nor even desired to do more than introduce my companions of these few half-hours to the beauties of this philosophy. Subjects which have filled the lives of the world's greatest thinkers and crowded the libraries of the civilized world can hardly be treated with anything approaching adequacy in the space I have allowed myself. At most I have tried to bring the great truths of that philosophy with the proofs that underlie them within the range of readers who, either from lack of time or lack of acquaintance, would be repelled by the

sight of large volumes filled with terms that seem almost a strange language. I have tried to make my papers act the genial mutual acquaintance who brings together people not otherwise likely to meet. It is almost time for me to withdraw myself and my papers and leave you together.

But before we go, I must call attention to a fact which no doubt has struck every thoughtful reader of these pages, the fact that every road of true philosophy leads upward toward a single goal. Though the student start his search for truth, as the Greeks did, from pagan Athens, or as the Arabs did, from Cadiz, his road must ultimately lead him upward toward the Supreme Being. The by-paths and the downward trails are ever the roads of error. The same instinct which in moments of intense emotional crisis wrings even from reluctant hearts the cry to their Maker has forced logical thinkers, willing and unwilling, to recognize, even if it was but to attack, the Creator.

For without Him, philosophy is a murky blur. The unquestionable plan and order of this wonderful universe, a fact so fundamental that no satisfactory philosophy can ignore it, is a mystery dark and impenetrable and filled with contradictions unless He exists. The admission of a Directive Intelligence has been and is the only adequate explanation of the fact that instead of a void filled with meaningless chaos, planets roll on with mathematical precision, while in all the vast reaches of space, order, harmonious, intelligent, unfailing, reigns.

If the material facts of sticks and stones and motion are mysteries without God, the human soul with its free will and its tremendous intellect is simple contradiction. Here is a spiritual being, a thing not of material elements but transcending them all. Whence could such a being have its origin? Certainly not from the chemical and

physical forces of the world, for its power to understand and freely to will is precisely the power which no physical force possesses. These powers which surpass anything in nature must have their origin in some being beyond and above nature, some being who first possessed them in himself before he gave them to the human soul. Once more the mind finds itself face to face with the Being Christians call God.

That insatiable craving for happiness which is the occasion of so much of the world's fairest romance and so much of its most sordid misery, has no adequate satisfaction unless once more the philosopher turns to an infinite being. Not the fairest creature in all the world has been able to satisfy the human desire to love and be loved. Every human affection, the love of Dante for his Beatrice, of Petrarch for his Laura, the beautifully idealized love of the Brownings, has fallen far short of the capacity of the human soul to give and to receive love. Our hearts, even those the ardor of whose love has burst forth in the world's finest lyrics and most exquisite melodies, have never been more than moistened with the love that they are capable of containing. For that we need a being we can love without fear of disillusionment or weariness or loss. Such a being is God, the all-beautiful.

The man who rejects no less than the man who follows the moral law does so with the consciousness of a direct mandate binding his conscience. It is a force that no one can escape by flight. In the depths of wickedness the stern command is there poisoning the sweetest pleasures of sin and sowing in the soul the seeds of bitterness and remorse. In the heights of sanctity it is there, rendering sweet and pleasurable the obedience

freely given and, even in the midst of a martyr's physical agony or a confessor's trials and neglect, blessing with a peace that defies pain and misunderstanding and the contempt of men. No sane man has escaped or can escape that binding, ubiquitous law; and for it, once more, there is only one adequate explanation: a powerful Lawgiver, above and beyond our nature, who has bound it with His commands which we can refuse to obey, but which we spurn at our peril. Again has pure logic arguing on an incontestible fact turned our faces up toward God.

There is, then, only one goal toward which every road of truth inevitably leads: God, the supreme and perfect truth. Whether we look into the reaches of heaven or into our own souls, whether we read the triumphs of man's intellectual achievement or study in the face of a saint or a criminal the individual record of man's subjection to the moral law, we are forced to recognize the presence of that powerful Being to whom an inborn instinct impels men to bend the knee.

That very act which with primitive peoples is pure instinct or a custom consecrated by the history of their race may become for civilized man his highest tribute to the sanctity of truth and the compelling power of beauty. No physical compulsion bends our knee before the Power above our nature. We may stand before Him and to His face defy Him. That is the privilege and the peril of our human liberty. But who that loves supremely truth and beauty, that feels within him a stirring at thought of true greatness and power, can stand unmoved before the Being who flung the stars into their endless orbits and planted in human souls their tremendous powers and capacities?

There is no slave service in our reverence of the

world's creator. It is the proud homage of free beings paid to the one who represents in the highest degree all that the human heart supremely craves—beauty, truth, and boundless power. It is an acknowledgment on our part that the world, whose color leaps up to charm our eyes, whose waterfalls and singing birds drown our souls in music, whose extent astounds and whose beauty is our constant delight; the human souls about us whose companionship robs pain of its torture and makes imperfect mortals loving and loveable; our very persons with their powers of soul and body, are gifts to us from a God who holds out to us a blessed immortality in return for our love and service.

Philosophy has no higher destiny than to lead the mind into the sanctuary of God.



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